

Youth Perspectives on Engaging with Orchestras

June 16, 2023

LINDSAY NOVA: Welcome to today's session on youth perspectives with engaging with orchestras. So I know you just got up this morning and you're thinking like, the first thing I need is a whole lot of data and pie charts, which are basically like visual caffeine. But we're really excited to share with you what we've been working on, and super excited to be here with you, Sonja.

SONJA THOMS: Yes, yes, it's great to be here. I hope you've had a fantastic conference so far. For me it's been wonderful to be back in my hometown. I was born in Pittsburgh, and worked at the Pittsburgh Symphony for quite a while, so it's been great to be home again and connect with all of you in our orchestral community. Lindsay and I have been working on this for a few months.

LINDSAY: A few months.

SONJA: [LAUGHING] And we are honored to be here, number one. Honored that the League is prioritizing youth development in their strategic plan. We couldn't be more excited. And we're just grateful to be able to share this with you today. Thank you for spending your Friday morning with us. And let's get going.

LINDSAY: Yeah, so first, we're going to introduce ourselves. So my name is Lindsay Nova, I'm executive director of Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestras. Don't try to repeat it, TRYPO is a great acronym. We use it a lot. So we're here in Pittsburgh. I've been in this role for 12 years this summer, which I can hardly believe. But —

[APPLAUSE]

LINDSAY: Thank you, thank you. I feel like with three of those years being in COVID, do you guys feel this way? Like it simultaneously feels like dog years, like it's 12 years, but also like a month. It's both at the same time. So I'm a huge dork. I'm a big conference junkie. I love conference every year. I cannot wait for — to come here. I'm excited for Houston next year as well. And I'm really excited to be the incoming chair of the youth orchestra division, and taking the reins from my good friend, Rosina, who has done a fantastic job the last few years. Bravo Rosina.

[APPLAUSE]

[0:02:01.4]

LINDSAY: And I was just telling Heather that my goal — we talk about this at TRYPO, is to — we have a term we call being endearingly annoying. So I plan to be very endearingly annoying about the role of youth in what we're doing here at the League. So prior to my time at TRYPO I was in the artistic department at the Pittsburgh Symphony, where I also got to work with Sonja, and I was also the director of operations for the Utah Symphony and Utah Opera, as well as worked briefly for Classical Singer Magazine.

Not briefly, that's a family business. I was a fetus when I started working for Classical Singer. And my background is in French horn performance at the Eastman School of Music, and French language also. And we were actually at Eastman together. We go way back.

SONJA: And I'm Sonja Thoms, I'm the vice president and general manager at the Nashville Symphony. I'm also the creator of OrchestraCareers.com. It's an online community where students can learn all about all the careers available with orchestras, and meet the professionals doing those jobs. I've had the honor of helping the League get the student constituency started, and I've been spending most of my time with our amazing students, a lot of them who are here today. But we have, I think, 30 students registered for this conference this year.

And so it's our second year of in-person content, and it's just been such an awesome time. But like Lindsay said, we were at Eastman School of Music together. I studied oboe, and continued on to Rice University for my master's. And after grad school I discovered that there were people that worked backstage at orchestras too. And I discovered that through an internship at the Kennedy Center at the National Symphony, I was an operations intern. That led me to a job in operations, and nine years here at the Pittsburgh Symphony. And that was before I came to Nashville in 2015.

LINDSAY: So what do we hope you're going to get out of this presentation besides being thoroughly entertained by our wit and charm? So first and foremost, I'm hoping you leave with a perspective shift. I know I had one as we were sifting through this data. It was really fun to pretend that I was a data analyst as we were working through all the charts and graphs. So I hope that that perspective shift is in store for you as well.

[0:04:12.3]

We hope that it prompts some reflection on what you could do differently. Maybe even like have an idea or a lightbulb moment while you're here. And lastly, it can be so easy to get bogged down in the things that are hard about what we do, especially all of the things that have been hard very, very recently. So we hope that you walk out of here maybe with a little pep in your step and a little hope for the future. So —

SONJA: Yes, I like to call — I've been calling this our subtitle, Vision 2043. So what is that? Well, today we're going to talk about the vision for this industry in 2043. And that might feel like a really long time away. After all, it's like six CBA negotiations, thousands of concerts, and I don't even want to know how many meetings. [LAUGHING] But we felt the urgency to talk about 2043, because the future of our industry is going to be fundamentally shaped by the way we engaged our youth today. So let's get started.

LINDSAY: So first of all, why should you care? As Sonja mentioned, this 20 years seems like a long time away. And I just — I feel like I know all too well how hard it can be to think ahead when you know — like you're not even sure how you're going to get through the week. And I remember a week when I was working with operations in the symphony, and Joshua Bell is coming to town, and there's so much to do, and there's a masterworks series, and I've got Renee Fleming's contract to do, and all this stuff, and education department's waiting for something. And I'm like, "Education, you're really cute. I'm busy. I'll get to you a little bit later."

[0:05:46.3]

And I just — okay, Abriel [?], I want you to close your ears for a second. Akari [?], Emily, you too. Don't listen to what I'm about to say. I never had any interest in working with children ever. Good job, you didn't hear that. When I was hired to work for TRYPO, I was like, oh, this'll be fun, like it'll be a five year stepping stone, and I had a full blown like music evangelical style conversion to music education about three years after I started working there.

This is why — you didn't hear that. You didn't hear that. And it happened actually — there was this social media post that went TRYPO viral, which means that like 20 people shared it. And it was these alums who started posting about like what were their top 10 classical favorite pieces, and a lot of them ended up go to PSO [?] after. So like five of them were pieces they played in TRYPO and five were pieces they played in PSO.

And they were all so excited about this rep. And I had this realization of like, I never wanted to work with kids, but these aren't kids, they're future adults, which is not the same thing. It's just — again,

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don't listen. Their brains are still soft and malleable. Like we have this really small window of opportunity to have this impact that lasts for decades. And so here I still am, 12 years later, after my five year stepping stone.

So if this feels like you, which if you've been in New York City, like is a little bit more probably — yeah, close to home than you care to admit. Or if this feels like you because you just have stuff coming from you at every single angle. Or if you're sitting there going, is this generation really the target demographic I need to talk to, I've got a five million dollar deficit to close, like I need to do that right now. Yes, yes, it is. Oh, what? Agh!

SONJA: What is that in there?

LINDSAY: No, we were supposed to take that slide out.

SONJA: Oh my god, yeah. Sorry.

LINDSAY: Sorry.

SONJA: Yeah, so we've been friends for a long time. And maybe you thought — you can go back to that one, because I've got a joke about it.

LINDSAY: Okay. [LAUGHING]

[0:07:57.7]

SONJA: So yes, we didn't go to Eastman five years ago like you might think because of our — you know, the youthfulness of us, but —

LINDSAY: Yes, and our wit.

SONJA: But we realized in this process, we were — we graduated 20 years ago today. Not today, but maybe it was today, from Eastman. So we've been friends for a really long time.

LINDSAY: A really long time.

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SONJA: So long that overalls are back in style.

LINDSAY: Yes, yes.

SONJA: And I was wondering, would we have been Swifties? I don't know. Okay, well —

LINDSAY: I'm not cool. [LAUGHING]

SONJA: But later in our presentation, Lindsay and I are going to talk about the students who will be at the core of our industry in 20 years. But I invite you to consider the fact that had there been a conference session in 2003, we are the students we're going to be talking about today. We are vision 2023. We were — you know, and that means that the experiences we had as aspiring young musicians 20 years ago has shaped us today.

So I just pause here for a moment and ask you to think about where were you 20 years ago? What was your relationship with music? What were you focused on? What did you not know existed yet? I know 20 years ago I didn't even know this work existed, this side of the business existed, but —

LINDSAY: No, I had no idea. I just thought people showed up and were like, "Hey, we feel like putting a concert on today. Let's see what that —" So what is Vision 2043? So spoiler alert, we're going to give you the end of the story in about five seconds, but you still have to stay for the rest. I promise, it's fascinating. Oops, okay. So here is Vision 2043.

[0:09:39.3]

SONJA: So we spent a lot of time listening to students from the last few months, and we're going to share more in depth what they've said. And — but what we're excited to share is that Vision 2043 looks like music students today are going to be significantly engaged with orchestras in some capacity. That they want to financially support orchestras. They expect that orchestras continue to shift in the terms of DEI, and they see orchestras communicating differently with their audiences. But how do we know this?

LINDSAY: So here is what we did. Like I said, we pretended that we were data analysts for about the past six months. We had a lot of fun doing it. We started with some focus groups with Pittsburgh students, and some Duane students. And they helped us formulate a survey. And the survey

questions were generated after the focus groups. We chose to limit the amount of open answer questions and try to make it really simple and easy to fill out.

We had 500 responses, 275 of those filled it to completion. And we sent this to as many people as we could to get the word out. It went to the League of American Orchestra's youth orchestra division, a lot of university contexts, and the orchestra careers mailing list.

SONJA: And so these were some of the organizations that helped us distribute the survey as well. We've got youth orchestras, colleges, League of American Orchestras, and lots lots more.

LINDSAY: And specifically targeting serious music students. So those that are spending a lot of time, whether in youth orchestra or are music majors. So first we're going to look at the education distribution. So you can see that the majority of our respondents were in high school, 66%, and if we combine all of our college students, about 27% are undergrad, grad, or very recently graduated from college.

SONJA: All right, should we ask some questions?

LINDSAY: Yeah.

SONJA: Get some participation?

LINDSAY: So how do we get to Vision 2043? So first —

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

[0:12:01.0]

SONJA: Well, we have — I mean, we have the education level pretty much, and —

LINDSAY: Yeah, the education level and the city and — what other questions did we ask? I think — we didn't go too far into demographics, yeah.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

LINDSAY: No, you're fine, you're fine. We would love to dig in a little more on that on the next survey, because we already have ideas of what questions we want to ask next year. So first, we'd like to test some of our assumptions. So true or false, most serious music students have a goal of being a professional musician, primary goal of being a professional musician. Who thinks this is true? Raise your hand.

SONJA: Whoa.

LINDSAY: Who thinks this is false? Raise your hand. All right.

SONJA: Wow.

LINDSAY: Way to go.

SONJA: A plus.

LINDSAY: Very true. You are true that it is false. 28% of those surveys said that being a professional musician was their primary goal. However, if we look at a category that Sonja and I started to call, yes-ish, which means feeling positively about the idea of being a professional musician, so we combined my goal with some interest and significant interest. 74% of music students feel positively about the concept. However, most serious music students don't have that as a primary goal.

SONJA: And I was a little curious about what the progression was between the high school students that answered this question and the college students. So we broke out this data a little differently by education level and — because for me personally, by the end of six years of music school I was less convinced that I only wanted to be a professional musician. And so we kind of also did one more pie chart of that that kind of showed better this yes-ish category, where we combined the different levels of positive interest, and it was interesting to me that it was slightly reduced between high school and college students as to that being their primary goal.

[0:14:05.9]

LINDSAY: So another question we asked was whether they wanted to be a staff member of an orchestra in 20 years.

SONJA: Yeah, which is a career I didn't know existed until after grad school. So it wasn't really surprising to me that maybe 38% were like, "Oh, that's not for me." But yes-ish total was about 46%. So we'll keep creeping that up now.

LINDSAY: And seven percent that's their primary goal, which was interesting. And then this was fascinating, that 46% of the respondents said their primary goal of their future with orchestra music is to be an audience member. And if we combine the yes-ish category of an audience member, it's 98% of music students see themselves as being in your audiences in the next 20 years. 98%. We don't know what's going on with those two percent, but 98%.

Okay, so now that we know who has filled out the survey and what role they see orchestras playing in their future, we're going to talk more about their current engagement with your local — with their local orchestra.

SONJA: And one of the first questions we asked was, how often do you attend orchestra concerts currently. So 55% was once or twice a year, 37% once or twice a month, four percent every week, and another four percent said never.

LINDSAY: So now we're going to look at some of the reasons why the students attend or don't attend more often, and we came at these questions a few different ways. So first, we had — based on the focus groups we issued a pre-populated list and asked the students to rank the reasons that they — that affect their attendance. So you see in the top four, I'm just really busy is definitely number one, and that features pretty prominently throughout the open ended answers as well.

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Cost of tickets as number two. I don't want to go alone featured number three. And transportation is number four. And the second way that we looked at this answer was looking through the open ended responses of the survey, we then categorized some of the things we saw that the students themselves were self-reflecting on. And again, cost of tickets, really prominent.

Programming and opinions on what you're programming and why is really, really prevalent, and we're going to have the students talk about that a little bit later. Issues with how to attend and when the concerts are. Again, that kind of reflects too I'm just really busy, that the concert schedules don't fit into their lives. And marketing started to appear pretty prominently and we're going to talk about that in the survey as well.

SONJA: So we're going to sample some of the open ended answers that we received, and they started to kind of really come together in a couple different themes. So here's a sample of some that focused on advertising. It really seemed like they felt left out of the advertising. And advertising only targets older audiences, orchestras don't do enough to try and advertise themselves to the larger population of people. And what do orchestras get wrong? We'll get to how we asked that question. But to advertising to anyone under 60.

LINDSAY: This other concept started to come up, that we started to see students saying, "You know, I'm sitting here in the audience, and I don't even think you know that I'm here. Talk to me, engage with me." These were some of the sample responses that really spoke to us of this concept of acknowledge me. I like when conductors are more interactive with the audience. Make jokes, keep us engaged. Talk to the audience more, give us some background. Make it personal. So we're going to keep talking about some of the organic themes, but this was a really interesting one, that they want you to be aware that they are there and speak to them.

[0:17:55.8]

SONJA: And elitism really started to crop up as a theme in these open ended questions. And it was kind of represented by a small number of the respondents with regards to attendance barriers, and there's even more answers that showed up later in the survey. But you'll hear a bit more about — more of the themes later in the panel discussion. But I just wanted to read a couple of these. You know, performances are stuffy, and have rules that only certain people know or understand. Policing of audience members to look, act, be a specific way. And more can be done and explored out of the tradition and norms.

LINDSAY: Okay, time to test your assumptions again.

SONJA: Yeah, so we wanted to test how aware music students are about the inner workings of our organizations. I certainly didn't know as a student how important fundraising was to the longevity of an organization. So I was curious what kind of answers we would get. So first, let's see what you think they'll say. Most serious music students know that fundraising is a significant part of orchestra survival. True? Who thinks that's true? Okay, okay. Who thinks that's false?

LINDSAY: Ha-ha, we got em.

SONJA: Ha-ha. Okay. [LAUGHING] We dug a little deeper to ask them if they knew that donations were what was crucial in that work of fundraising. And part of the reason we asked this question, because you had the focus groups here, and learned from the students, especially some of the younger ones, that they weren't aware that that was part of the business model. So we wanted to ask everyone. And some — oh, you said that some of the focus groups said, "Hey, they should make it really easy to donate."

LINDSAY: They should ask. They should ask.

SONJA: They should ask us. [LAUGHING]

LINDSAY: Just so you know. Problem solved. Ask.

SONJA: Exactly. But I have to wonder if they're seeing — you know, if you think about your social media feeds and the way especially our youth consume content, they're used to seeing calls for donations in their social media feeds. This is just my non-scientific theory. And maybe our orchestras aren't showing up where they're seeing — or showing up in the same way that they're responding to.

[0:20:03.7]

However, 65% said yes. I was kind of shocked by that. But one of our favorite questions in this whole survey, and we didn't leave it to the end, we're telling you now. This is the kind of people we are. We're going to let — we think you'll be excited. In 20 years, do you see yourself financially supporting orchestras?

LINDSAY: Okay, ready? You ready? This is your visual caffeine right here.

SONJA: Here we go. Boom.

LINDSAY: 92% of survey respondents see themselves supporting your orchestra. Heather, did we install that confetti cannon? No? Okay, all right, yeah. So now the thing I want to put this next to in your brains is that when we think about the goal of these students 20 years from now in relationship to attending your concerts, so remember, 98% of students want to be your audience member, and 92% of them are saying, yes, they want to financially support you in the future.

So you put those two together, and now I want you to think about whether or not this is your target demographic for that fundraising deficit that you're worried about. Now granted, it's not today's fundraising deficit, but it is one of your fundraising deficits, that 20 years from now, again, if we'd had this conference in 20 — whatever year that was, 2003. Oh god, okay. 2003. This is what we're talking about when we're talking about the future of our industry.

So they do, however, for them to get to the spot where they want to be there, they want to see some things change. So now we're going to go into diversity, equity, and inclusion. So first of all, based on the focus groups in Pittsburgh, we didn't want to make the assumption that everybody was on the same page about DEI. I know there's a lot of ways to talk about this. There's a lot of other versions of the acronym. We liked this very simple definition just to make sure that we were talking about the same terms with the students. So we wanted to show you how we were positioning it with the students.

And we asked a series of questions about, first of all, their awareness of DEI and about orchestras' work in DEI. So in the focus groups, again, similar to some of the other topics, we weren't entirely sure that students knew what it was, because in the focus groups a number of students — this was new to them. So that's where we wanted to start. And we were actually pleased to see that 79% of music students feel like they have a general awareness of what DEI is.

[0:22:31.8]

SONJA: And the other thing we were interested in was how the awareness of DEI progressed as the students progressed in their education. And so I thought it came actually as not much of a surprise that the older students had much more awareness of the DEI, and actually the three percent of undergrad students maybe were the only honest ones who said, "I have no idea of what you're talking about."

LINDSAY: So I think if you're anything like me, the thing that's fascinating about this is that we know from our strategic plans, and our board meetings, and our committee meetings, and our conference sessions, and the fact that DEI has been so present even here at the League, it feels like it's everywhere, right? Don't you feel like you're oozing DEI and trying so hard to make a dent? So we were curious if the students are as aware of how present it feels like we are.

And the truth is that, no, they don't really generally have that same sense of — that it is omnipresent. And they don't necessarily know a whole lot of what we're thinking about it. So 46% don't know what we're thinking about it. 44% have awareness and think it's on the right path. Six percent know a lot about it and think it's going too far.

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So we're going to get into some of the open ended answers here. And this is going to be a lot of text, but I have a reason for it. So one of our favorite open ended questions we put on our survey was, what are orchestras getting right? And this was globally, this was not tied to any one specific section. But here's a sampling of the open ended answers specific to what orchestra is getting right. And what is interesting to me here is the verb choices and the ways that the students were describing movement.

[0:24:23.0]

It was — it's all active. Shifting artistic planning, slowly started, efforts towards, trying to be, starting to see, working on, moving towards, making steps in the right direction. It was also very interesting that 20% of these open ended answers, the students self-chose to focus their answers on DEI, which is in itself that mental choice of what are orchestras getting right. I'm going to talk about DEI in my answer is a really fascinating trend that we saw in the open ended responses.

SONJA: Now, we're going to share a little bit more about the flip side of that question we asked, which hopefully you are not scared of the answers. But what are orchestras getting wrong? And it started to — we started to see a couple different themes really related to still this topic of DEI that started to emerge. And so those are community engagement, wealth disparity, and access. There was an anti-DEI response, meaning kind of a like not for all the work that we're doing. That was a very small percentage. Racial and ethnic representation, and there's an authenticity and repertoire conversation.

LINDSAY: And also 27% of those who answered the question about DEI chose to focus on — from what are orchestras getting wrong chose to focus on DEI. So also a lot of interest in this particular direction.

SONJA: So we're going to share a couple more of those open ended answers. And just to give you a taste of what we are hearing from the students, this was some responses that we started to see these community engagement, wealth disparity, and access themes emerging. And I think the orchestra industry still attracts mainly elderly, more wealthy people, and I would like to see that change.

[0:26:17.3]

LINDSAY: So here were some of the responses we saw in the anti-DEI category. And it was certainly a minority voice. Three percent of those that completed the what are orchestras getting wrong question feel like they don't like the direction of DEI. And you can see the way that they're — if you can read it. I'll read a couple of them. They feel like we're focusing too much on equity, that we're inserting politics and agendas into music performance, saturation with DEI at the exclusion of organic artistry.

So these responses didn't surprise me. I think what I felt heartened by though was this was certainly not the percentage of — it's not representative of the national conversation. We certainly have a smaller group of folks who don't like the work in DEI than we do on the national stage.

SONJA: So the next kind of thematic topic that we saw emerging was authenticity and repertoire. And you might be wondering why we paired these together, but really we saw students drawing those connections between programming and authenticity in a way that I know I hadn't really considered. For instance, one said, "Programming works by people of color or diverse composers all in one program," was something that this person felt orchestras were getting wrong. "It doesn't feel genuine, and I'd much rather these works be paired with the classics so you can tour it like an art museum. To stick all the diverse composers on the same program is missing the point."

LINDSAY: And the fourth category in racial and ethnic representation. Now, some of these particular comments aren't necessarily revolutionary, but one of the things that stuck Sonja and me is that this was not how we were talking in 2003. But we certainly are seeing students saying too much programming of old dead white men. It's extremely white, not enough diversity. Most of the orchestras I've seen are predominantly white, and East Asian.

So there's definitely a lot of awareness on the representation factor here. So we're going to invite our student panelists to come up and join us. And while they do, we're going to do one more thing. Come on up, guys. You can come up and take a seat.

[0:28:32.3]

SONJA: Yeah, we're going to share one of our other favorite questions from the survey. And after all, what Powerpoint wouldn't be complete without a word cloud?

LINDSAY: Oh, we've got to have a word cloud.

SONJA: We deliver. You want it, we deliver. So how did you feel at an orchestra concert?

LINDSAY: Excited. Interested. Exhilarated. Moved. Anticipation. Enjoyable. Motivated. Amazed. Relaxed. Transported. Bored. Okay, who wrote that? Calm. Curious. These are the words that the students used to describe how they feel when they are at your concerts. So when I talk about leaving with hope, I hope this is one of the things that you remember when you leave this space today.

SONJA: Well, and maybe some of these would have been your words if you had answered that question. And I think it's super important that we all stay very connected to how we truly feel, and why we do what we do. Because actually no matter what life phase or what age, this I believe --we believe is what connects us.

LINDSAY: Yes. So we have thrown a lot of stats at you, quotes, info, pie charts. You're all 100% awake I know. So we want now to hear from some representative students that are the types of students who answered the survey. So let's first meet our panelists.

SONJA: All right, are we check, check, checked? All right, here we go. Can you hear us? Okay.

LINDSAY: So let's — we're going to invite them to just introduce themselves so you know who is who up here on the stage, or floor. And why don't you say your name, and then go ahead and first respond to how the survey results — did it mirror, match your expectations and of your colleagues and your friends that you were in school with.

LAUREN ZWANICK: Sure. So good morning everyone. My name is Lauren Zwanick [?]. So at the end of the address book. I am a third year doctoral student at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. And I am working towards a degree in flute performance, but my graduate assistantship is with the Las Vegas Philharmonic. So my role with them is overseeing all of our educational programming in our department, and then as well as stage management calling all of our concerts.

[0:30:53.2]

So for me, being a little bit later in my educational experience through high school, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral all throughout the US, I do have to say that this survey is not at all surprising to me. The conversations that I have with fellow colleagues, younger students within both private and public schools like K-12, staff, whether it being at universities or at our local orchestras and arts organizations, I find this to be pretty on point of what people are feeling.

ABREEL: Hi everyone. My name is Abreel [?]. I'm a senior at Shadyside Academy here in Pittsburgh. I play the violin in TRYPO. And yeah, I would say that this survey, the results of it were pretty representative of what me and my friends at my high school feel about like going to concerts, like orchestra concerts specifically.

[0:31:55.2]

COOPER CROMWELL WHITLEY: HI, I'm Cooper Cromwell Whitley. I'm a current second semester senior at the University of Michigan. I'm trying to finish that, it's complicated. But I'm also doing a fellowship here with the Pittsburgh Symphony, I just finished my first year. And yeah, I mean, I really only have experience with the undergrad portion of the statistics that you all saw, but generally I would have to say that they're pretty on point in terms of what I've talked about with my colleagues, and just really interesting to see the other numbers that are presented. So yeah.

AKARI OCALA: Good morning, my name is Akari Ocala [?]. I am the operations assistant and [UNINTEL] at TRYPO. Yeah, it was interesting to see the results of the survey, and I think it's a really well representation of not just the classical music industry, but also just like in general in our lives, especially about DEIA. For example, I saw there was a lot of East Asian representation in the diversity, but it's a common problem that we have in the AIPI program as well. So yeah, it was really interesting.

WILLIAM RYAN: Hi, my name is William. I'm currently a junior in high school, and I'm a member of the —

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

WILLIAM: I'm — my name is William Ryan. I'm currently a junior in high school, and I'm a violinist in the Worcester Youth Orchestra in Massachusetts. I have to say the survey was fairly accurate to what I've heard from people around me.

SONJA: Great, okay. So we mentioned that there are a few organic themes that bubbled up in the survey. And one of the — we talked a little bit about elitism. We can come back to that later. But another one that came up in a lot of the open ended answers that some of our panelists felt strongly about was mental health. So here are a few of the quotes from the survey that had to — that related to mental health.

[0:34:06.9]

And I found it fascinating that there was awareness of this concept that, again, seems to be pretty prevalent in the adult conversations that are happening. And for there to be awareness of this on the student level was pretty fascinating as well. So I'm going to invite Akari to discuss your thoughts about that. And panelists, when you're speaking, why don't you stand up so the folks in the back of the room can see and hear you a little bit better. Akari, do you mind standing up? Thank you.

AKARI: Hi everyone. Yeah, so I wanted to talk about mental health in music industry today. So I think the results that there is a lot of people, younger students that didn't know that mental health was an issue in the orchestras. And I think the issue comes in the higher education and university levels. So oftentimes I see high school — especially working with TRYPO, we have a great program for high school students, and they're having a great time.

And we send them off to college to study music, and they are sometimes I think like, oh, this student's going to this university and studying with this person, I hope that's okay. So I think a lot of the issue comes from high education, university levels. So yeah, it's everything is an institutional issue, and I think like some of the examples are like how practice rooms are set up at universities. No windows, isolation, you're just completely by yourself.

It's a very different approach the students are having towards music from their high school life and when they start to get to the professional stage. And my experience is that I've been to the counseling center at universities before, and I saw that there were pamphlets specifically for performance majors or music students, and I thought that was very interesting that it seems like some universities are aware of mental health issues for musicians, and why is nothing happening about it.

[0:36:02.5]

And also it's really interesting to read about the job satisfaction survey as well. Musicians are not very happy with their life. And so I don't know, I think it's very important for musicians to focus on their mental health. And since like how can they make people feel emotions with their music if they're not happy themselves? So that's — yeah, that's my opinion.

LINDSAY: Thank you, Akari.

[APPLAUSE]

LINDSAY: Lauren, you had some thoughts about mental health as well. Do you want to share? Can you stand up?

LAUREN: Sure. Okay, so in my career, I'm in my late twenties, and I must say that undergraduate, 10 years ago this was not a conversation. Five years ago in my master's, starting to become a conversation when I sought out resources with mental health, physical health. We're seeing in maybe the past 20 or 30 years, I'm not a specialist, but we're seeing increases of resources, whether it's body mapping, and Alexander technique, whether it's music therapy and art therapy, mental musicianship, mental health resources.

But to be quite honest, we need to really figure out where our resources end, where they start and where they end. Because so much of what we do is fueled by emotions. We are working with living, breathing people. And it's hard, because I don't have a degree in counseling. I don't have a degree and experience in psychotherapy. And so the resources that I can give my students as a performer, as an educator, and then as arts admin, I feel are pretty limited.

[0:38:00.7]

But what I can do is start having authentic conversations. So what are we doing with our CBAs to start really honing in on resources that we can help our musicians, that we can help with our staff? What can we do with our programming, whether it's a special program offer, or during a mental health awareness week, or a month, that we can bring into our schools and our partners with physical and mental donors.

So like partnering with health and other various institutions and businesses, what can we do to create partnerships so we have meaningful experiences for the people that we work with, but we're also providing the resources with people who have that experience and those degrees. So I think that we have a very long way to go.

It's something that is incredibly new. But I think first off we need to have conversations of what is feasible within our orchestras, whether it's youth or professional, and then moving from there of what are our musicians doing, and how can we draw from the people around us to help stimulate these conversations moving forward.

LINDSAY: Thank you, Lauren.

[APPLAUSE]

SONJA: Do any of our panelists have anything to add about mental health that's come up since you heard from your colleagues?

LINDSAY: No? Okay.

SONJA: So another topic we wanted to talk a little bit about was programming. And —

LINDSAY: Wow, the students have a lot to say about programming. [LAUGHING]

SONJA: And you know, kind of what impact has your programming, your orchestras had on their experience with orchestras. So Abreel, you had such a great story. I would invite you to stand and tell us the story about your parents coming to a TRYPO concert.

[0:40:01.0]

ABREEL: Yeah, so my parents have been coming to all of my TRYPO concerts since I was younger. And we are all from — we're all originally from Mexico. And they always enjoy seeing me play and the orchestra play, but in our last spring concert, we actually played Moncayo's *Huapango*. And that's a song that they've heard throughout their life, you know?

It's apart from like outside of a classical orchestra concert, they just play it naturally in the country. And so when they came to this concert and saw us play that, they got really excited. They were more engaged. They were able to like fully recognize something, immerse themselves. And of course they enjoyed the rest of the pieces we played, but I feel like just them being able to recognize that piece, that allowed them to like really enjoy — or it made the experience different from any other orchestra concert they had been to.

And so with that said though, I still personally — I believe that like you should still — or in programming there should still be a balance between like pieces that the audience can see themselves — can recognize, but like also classical pieces. I think like in the first quote, like not enough classical is being used. I think a balance is good between the two. But that is my experience, and my parent's experience with like cultural music and the classical music in my orchestra concert.

LINDSAY: Thank you.

SONJA: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

SONJA: So Cooper, you had some thoughts about this too. Can you share those with us?

COOPER: Yeah, absolutely. So I just wanted to quickly kind of talk about sort of my experience in Pittsburgh so far. I had this whole year with the Pittsburgh Symphony, it's been incredible. I've gotten a chance to play with colleagues that I have admired my entire life. It's pretty surreal playing in this orchestra. I didn't think I would get this chance this early on my life, or maybe necessarily ever.

[0:42:00.7]

And I've also gotten the chance to play I think virtually every type of program the PSO has put on. I think. Most. Like probably 90%. I've gotten the chance to play a lot of different types of concerts. And as a result of that, I've gotten a chance to see like where things are programmed in concerts. And I think that the biggest thing that I noticed that really, really stuck with me was on pretty much every outreach concert and children's concert, those were the types of concerts where you tended to see the composers that really aren't a part of the canon. You know, the Black composers, LGBTQ composers.

And I think for me personally, that was initially a little hard to digest. It kind of felt like — I mean, you know, the children's concerts and the outreach concerts, I mean, those aren't concerts that people are necessarily buying tickets for. Those are usually like funded concerts I think. I mean, I could be completely wrong. But it just felt like, oh, is this organization nervous to take a risk in programming a concert that — you know, a composer on a grand classics concert that might not necessarily get the type of ticket sales just because it's not Beethoven or Mozart.

And so I was a little like — I wasn't shocked, but I was a little like, oh man, I wish this should be a little different. And so anyways, so I thought about this for a little bit, and I ended up calling Aaron Dworkin, who I don't know if you know who Aaron Dworkin is, any of you, but he is the founder of the Sphinx Organization. And I just talked to him for probably about 20 minutes. And I was expressing my just like, why do you think an organization is doing this.

[0:44:11.7]

I mean, they are clearly playing the music, so why don't they feel like they could play it on a grand classics concert. And we talked for a little bit. And he opened up my thought process a little bit and made me sympathize a little bit. But he basically said while it's not ideal that, you know, organizations aren't really playing repertoire by Black composers on big main stage concerts, these outreach concerts and these children's concerts, a lot of the people attending them are colored.

And as a result of that, the music that is being played is being played for colored students and colored kids and kids who might end up wanting to go into the music business at some point. And so he was like, unintentionally as a result, there might be a positive impact being made that you're not necessarily seeing because, you know, these kids are getting inspired and they're able to see that, oh, maybe I — if I wanted to do this at some point in my life, if I wanted to become a composer, maybe I actually could do that.

And so while it's not ideal, I did think about that, and I was like, okay, okay, maybe this is okay. And so I thought about it, and I was like, okay yeah. It's obvious that the efforts are being made to program a wider variety of repertoire, but I would just hope that organizations would take a little bit more of a risk. And maybe once a year try just seeing the turnout on a grand classics concert.

[0:46:03.6]

I mean, sure, there are — there technically are programs. I mean, you'll all the time see, you know, New World Symphony with some — with like a Price piece or something. I mean, that's a very common program that you would see. But that's like probably the most common like historically like, you know — what am I trying to say? Like that is probably the most common program where the center is on African American spiritualism styles of playing. But anyways, I would just hope that organizations would take a little bit more of a risk on programming for bigger main stage concerts, that's what I'm trying to say. Thanks.

LINDSAY: Thank you, Cooper.

[APPLAUSE]

SONJA: So programming was not a question we asked on the survey at all, but when I sorted through the responses and categorized them, in the open ended answers, 20% of the students who — on

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what orchestras are getting wrong focused on programming, and 35% on what orchestras are getting right focused on programming. So I was really fascinated that there are so many opinions and they're kind of all over the place too, you know? You definitely need more rep by — with harps. You need less rep with harps.

LINDSAY: More Pops.

SONJA: More Pops.

LINDSAY: Less Pops.

SONJA: Less Pops. More John Williams. Less John Williams. More Tchaikovsky. Less Tchaikovsky.

LINDSAY: More viola concertos.

SONJA: More viola concertos, yes. But the thing that I think is so fascinating, again going back to one of the themes from earlier about like acknowledge me, engage with me. There are so many passionate opinions about what you are putting on that stage. Like what are ways that you could tap into that energy that might just completely shock you on the kinds of opinions and the things that the students have to say.

[0:47:59.4]

And there's more thoughts about programming here. Do any of our other panelists want to add anything about programming? Because I know you all have thoughts about it. Anyone else? Lauren, I know you've got something to say about programming.

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

SONJA: We do have time, yes.

LAUREN: All right. Yeah, for me, I think one of the biggest threads that I've been talking about with folks this week, and you might hear it during the closing panel today too, is authenticity. So what we choose to program, whether it's at a university level, whether it's our main stage concert series, more

of an intimate recital series, youth concert programming, with our repertoire, I think it is very, very vital for all of us to be authentic.

And I think what we're seeing here with the stats, and then also some of these comments, is that students are feeling like we're doing it just to check a box. And it's a fine line, right? We have these grants, we have programming standards, we have budgets. So sometimes with new music, sometimes with diversity, there is a higher cost. And unfortunately, we just can't pay for that. Or with budgeting, with time limits, it can be tricky.

And classics are classics, right? We want to have a nice breadth and diversity of what we're doing versus old versus new. But I think it's really important for us, whether we are the backstage, whether we are front of house, whether we are the people going into schools, whether we are the person or the people standing in front of the orchestra conducting. But I think it's really important to figure out why we're doing something.

[0:49:59.9]

So the purpose and the intention. If we're choosing to program Chen Yi with Tchaikovsky, what are the things that we can thread together? Is it a rhythmic motive? Is it cultural significance? Is there a piece of history that we can thread them together? It's not just because she is of Chinese descent, and she's a woman, but what is it musically, what is it historically, culturally. The list is endless.

And we can really start to figure out and have those authentic conversations to help lead people to those discoveries. So I think that is really important to have. Authentic conversations, and for us as individuals and as staff to really talk about why we are choosing the programs, and what makes this so incredibly special.

SONJA: Thank you Lauren.

[APPLAUSE]

AKARI: Yeah, I wanted to add to Lauren's comment about making an authentic conversation. There's often discourse about whether we should program certain composers on to the music program because it's like — because of their past political statement or anything like that. And I think I believe like it's — there was a complaint about — there was a comment about music being too political. But if

you look at the history, music has always been a little political. For example, Shostakovich made a lot of political statement with his music, and — but it's a great learning experience for us I think.

Like we can't erase history. We can't ignore the past by not programming those composers. Like for example, like Wagner. We need to make it more of an educational situation for all of us, that this is what happened in history, this is why composers are writing these things, and just acknowledge that that was part of the history, and make it a learning experience for everyone so that history doesn't repeat in the future.

SONJA: Thank you, Akari.

[APPLAUSE]

[0:52:07.2]

ABREEL: I just wanted to add to that really quick. I know like right now with modern artists, a lot of my friends, high schoolers, they say the phrase like separating the art from the artist. And so like even if they disagree with something the artist has done, like politically or in the world, they would continue listening to them. They wouldn't boycott them. And I feel like there's the debate, like whether you can separate the art from the artist, or like whatever they've done outside from their art impacts them so strongly that you can't do that at that point. So —

SONJA: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

LINDSAY: William, do you have anything you want to say? No, okay. So as you can tell, zero opinions about what you're programming and why. But one of the, I think, really interesting threads that came out of all of the opinions here were, you know, we know that when we're putting programs together, like those conversations about the why are happening. But sometimes the authenticity doesn't come across if you don't share the why.

Which goes back to the acknowledge me, the communication, you know? That there's more than just what you do on stage. Like they want to hear from you, they want to hear from the conductors. They

want to hear why you put that program together. And maybe not necessarily in the pre-concert talk that they're probably not going to go to.

L So I think that nuance is important. And we think about it a lot, but if we don't express it and give the audience an opportunity to engage with that nuance, it's a lost opportunity. And it can make for a deeper experience if we share that.

SONJA: So we're going to go over to advertising. This was fascinating. So William, can you tell us how you typically find out about concerts?

[0:53:55.3]

WILLIAM: Hi. So there's a number of times where I find out a new concert is happening over the course of the year, but starting right at the beginning I know I'm just sitting around in the house doing homework or something, and all of a sudden my mom calls me down and is like "The pigeon carried on our list of programs for the year."

[LAUGHTER]

SONJA: I love it.

WILLIAM: I always know that this comes every year. I know it's happening. I always love looking through it and picking out the concerts I want to go to. But I also never know when it's going to happen, and I never find it on my own. It's always one of my parents showing me that it's there. And I don't think that many young people, especially in high school, are checking the mail.

[LAUGHTER]

WILLIAM: So once that passes, there is another source that every so often, maybe once a month or every other month I will get another message that there's a concert going on, and that comes in the form of an email. I think I might be one of the kids that checks their email. And it's always cool to see the email, but I don't even know how I got on that email list. So I don't imagine that other people are on that email list.

[0:55:52.9]

And those two ways are the primary sources. The other one is also my parents doing, is they'll wait for when the new programs come out, and jump on the website of the orchestra or organization, and that's also not very forthcoming. I don't know, it's hidden behind this wall that you have to go searching through. Now, there is certainly other ways that this can be done and get youth attention. I know that if I'm ever scrolling through social media, I get posts from orchestras or music organizations. They show up in my page already.

And I know they'll show up in other kids' pages if they're involved in music somehow. A music student. So I think they really need to be — that side really needs to be expanded. Because I'm getting all of that stuff. They're not for my local orchestras. So I can't really act on those. But if I was getting them, then I would certainly know a lot more.

LINDSAY: Which platform, William?

WILLIAM: Instagram. Instagram is where that would show up.

LINDSAY: What about the other four? Which platforms?

SPEAKER: Instagram.

SPEAKER: Instagram.

LINDSAY: Instagram.

WILLIAM: Yeah, everyone agrees, Instagram.

[LAUGHTER]

LINDSAY: Is there any other place that you wish that you would see concerts advertised?

WILLIAM: I mean, I think the other best place is to go into schools and talk about them. In Worcester we had a concert at Mechanics Hall this year that I think at the time of the — that concert it broke the record for the amount of use there. It wasn't an orchestra, it was a solo recital. But what happened

and the reason for that was a studio lesson teacher brought their entire studio to go watch the recital. And that's what made the difference to break that record. So if you're going to schools, you'll be getting a lot more kids in your concerts.

[0:58:29.8]

LINDSAY: Awesome, thank you William.

SONJA: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

LINDSAY: Anyone else have a comment about advertising?

SONJA: One of you, I can't remember from our previous conversation, had said you get emails or notifications from your schools' sports teams quite often, but that the university or high school, I can't remember which level it was, why don't they do that for the music as well? Was that you, Abreel? Do you want to tell us a little bit more about — did I get that right or you have anything else to share?

ABREEL: So for my high school, every sport has their own Instagram page, and that's where they post the game dates. And most people only find out through that, they don't visit the school website. They know like, oh, there's a lacrosse game tonight at six, and it has a location and everything. But for example, when we have band concerts, or choir concerts, that doesn't show up so then people don't know where to go, when to go.

And I feel like this applies obviously to orchestras as well. Like if they posted that information, and it — and if it came out in the same way, if it showed up on student's pages in the same way on their feed, then maybe they would be more knowledgeable about where and when the concert is.

LINDSAY: Thank you.

SONJA: Thank you.

LINDSAY: Cooper, could you share about the student ticket — what you told me about the student ticket rate at Detroit?

[0:59:54.6]

COOPER: Yeah, absolutely. So as I said, I'm finishing up at the University of Michigan, and as a result of COVID, I only spent technically a year and three quarters in Michigan, but during that time I was able to go to a lot of Detroit Symphony concerts as a result of — they have a —

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

COOPER: You can't hear me? Oh, is that good? Is that good? Okay, sorry about that. So yeah, no, I was just saying, so I spent about a year and three quarters actually in Michigan. But during that time I went to a lot of Detroit Symphony concerts, and I was able to do that because they have a great student rate where you pay a flat 25 to see any concert over the season.

LINDSAY: Say it again.

COOPER: A flat \$25 to see any concert over the season. It's pretty insane. And right, the challenge is getting to Detroit, because Ann Arbor to Detroit, it's like a 45 minute drive and I didn't have a car. So you have to carpool, which that's fine. But that's like pretty — that's a pretty insane deal. And I can't speak to other organizations necessarily. I think — I could be wrong, I think the Chicago Symphony has a similar, similar deal. I'm not sure. But I know other organizations do. And so it's just food for thought. I know that the Pittsburgh Symphony doesn't have this. I'm just saying it could be something to think about in the future.

LINDSAY: So Cooper, you were telling me — because I know that one of the questions that comes up about a rate like that is, do the students then have a sense of value if they're getting all these tickets for free. You were telling me that you would go to the website, you'd pick the ticket, see how much it costs, and then the discount rate would drop the cost down. So every single ticket, you were aware of the value of the ticket?

COOPER: Yeah, I think. I think. I haven't bought a ticket in like a year, over a year. So if my memory is doing me justice, then I'm pretty sure that the way it works is you like apply for — or once you have that — once you've bought that \$25 like flat rate, then basically you see the ticket options at the

bottom. You can choose the zero dollar. So it's — yeah, it's — you see how much a ticket would normally cost is what I'm trying to say.

[1:02:20.4]

LINDSAY: Cooper, you have a question from a fan.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

LINDSAY: Good question.

COOPER: So by — oh. It really depends. It's inconsistent. I'd say for me on average, probably like a couple days before. That's usually when I learn that I would actually have a ride to the concert. So yeah, but I mean, for some people it could be maybe a week in advance. I couldn't tell you an exact number, but probably between a week and the day of, for sure.

LINDSAY: That's a great question. Why don't we hear from all of you about that. When are you making decisions about what concert?

LAUREN: So with the Las Vegas Phil, I typically send out correspondences two weeks and one week in advance to all of the Clark County School District teachers. University students, it is different in Vegas. Everything is pretty last minute unless you are going to see Adele, and that was like two years that you really had to plan for. So with our concerts, we do student rush tickets. And so two hours before the performance, it's a \$15 flat rate. Which can be tricky, because when we have more of the Pops concerts, like Bugs Bunny, John Williams this past year, we sold out.

[1:04:05.8]

So we couldn't really host a lot of students. But we find that it's more of a last minute of, oh right, my teacher's performing on Tchaik 4, I should probably go support them. And also Tchaik is really cool. So then like five hours beforehand they make plans, work with all their friends to carpool up to our performing arts center. And then, yeah, with universities, same thing. Things happen a few months in advance, and then as the time gets increasingly closer to the date, we usually get like two correspondences like that week of.

But then for me as a music student, I don't pick up my comp ticket until the day of. So again, it's pretty last minute of, oh right, I need a ticket, I can't just walk through the green room stage doors and just hop on stage, that I actually need to get a ticket. So I would say it is nice as gentle reminders throughout, but it's finding that nice balance that it's not so far in advance, and we aren't being suffocated with so much marketing. So yeah.

SPEAKER: [UNINTEL] to decide.

SPEAKER: I'd say like a day before is early for me. [LAUGHING] Yeah, just the day before or the day of I think.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I think I also usually decide on the day of, especially when I'm purchasing as like a student. Usually student rush tickets I can only purchase at the door. So I wish I could — there are many times I wish I could plan ahead and purchase student tickets online so that I can reserve my spot ahead of time. But it's usually always last minute for me as well.

[1:05:59.2]

SPEAKER: I get tickets anywhere between months before and a couple of days before.

[LAUGHTER]

LINDSAY: Yeah, right here in the plaid.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

SONJA: Did you hear the question in the back? No? The question was whether or not parents are taking them to see the concerts, or what role they played in bringing them to the symphony, and if so, why or why not. Yeah.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

SONJA: Are your parents patrons of a professional music organization. William, do you want to go first since you have the mic?

WILLIAM: Every time I go to a concert, it's — or not every time. There's like one or two that it's not. But almost every time it's my parents bringing me, or telling me that it's happening, so — it's almost always my parents.

[LAUGHTER]

LINDSAY: Akari, can you answer it two part? When you were in high school and then the role that maybe your friends play now in whether you go?

AKARI: Yeah, so I think my first like — my interest in music came from my parents taking me to concerts. So yeah, so when I was younger, oftentimes my parents would take me to concerts, and I enjoy my time, and I decided that's when I wanted to play my flute, was when I was much younger. My parents took me to concerts. But as I grew up and my passion for music grew as well, my parents kind of also stopped going with me. I think I was just a little more interested in going to the concerts than my parents were.

[1:08:15.5]

So they decided to just be like, okay, you go on alone. And I was also able — as I grew older, I was also able to just go alone. So yeah, but definitely my parents definitely did start my passion with going to concerts. So —

LINDSAY: Do you go by yourself now or do you want to go with friends?

AKARI: I actually enjoy going to concerts alone, but I also at times it's definitely like an experience. So if I do go with friends, I make it a whole evening thing, like a social event, going with friends. Having dinner afterwards, having dinner afterwards, whatever. So I think recently if I were to go, it's usually with friends pulling me, or just me going by myself because I happen to be interested in that program.

COOPER: So when I was in high school and even before high school, so both my parents are musicians. So throughout my life —

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

COOPER: Sorry. Both my parents are musicians. And so as a result of that, throughout my entire life, I have gone to many concerts with my parents. I mean, now I'm not living with them anymore. So I'm definitely going to the majority of my concerts alone. But they do still go to concerts with me, and I mean, because they're musicians that's like such a part of their life. So yeah, I definitely go to a lot of concerts with them still.

[1:09:58.2]

SPEAKER: I only go to concerts with my parents, and I feel like because they're not — neither of them are musicians, they only go with me to — like they only go because of me as well, so it's kind of like mutual. And also I think I would go with friends, but unfortunately like in my school there is really a very small number of kids that would actually go to orchestra concerts. Like in my entire high school, I would probably see like two other students my age there as well. And so I feel like there's not enough to go with a group of friends. So I just — I go with my parents. I'm stuck with them.

SPEAKER: So for me when I was in high school, I was in the Vermont Youth Orchestra, and so that was definitely a family experience. Both my parents and my brother would always come watch. In undergrad, my dad would drive six hours roundtrip to watch me perform in the wind ensemble and the orchestra at school. Now, I'm finding that the first question my husband asks me, are you playing in this concert? And if I say yes, he's there supporting me. And I'm not, he's not there.

And so he used to be a musician in high school. He's a mechanical engineer now. But to be quite honest, he is not the biggest classical music fan. What I am finding with my colleagues, and what I'm finding with my loved ones, is that they are there for the support. They are there for the social environment, and to be there to root friends and family on. So maybe that's going to open up a new conversation of having youth participants in your orchestras, having partnerships with local high schools and your philharmonic and symphony orchestras.

Just because it's okay, classical music is not for everyone, it's not their cup of tea. My husband loves ska music and classic rock. And that's totally fine. But it's really supporting the people who are on the stage that really can help draw new people in.

[1:12:12.0]

LINDSAY: We have time for maybe one or two more questions. Anyone want to ask our illustrious panel? Yeah, go ahead.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

LINDSAY: The question was if it would make a difference on the perception if — make sure I state it correctly. If rather than there being specific types of — you can only get a student ticket 15 minutes before, or in a specific section, that students could get a \$10 ticket any section, any time, any day, any time in advance, anything like that.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

LINDSAY: Treating them like a real person. Are you real people? Okay, Abreel, what do you think? Would that change your — ?

ABREEL: Yeah, I think what stood out most to me was any section. Like I know right now if I go on the PSO website, and I want to buy a ticket, there's like — you have to — you can select — it goes select by price or select by seat, and then you have to like go on the section. And that can either be confusing. Like for example, for my parents, they don't — they always ask, like "Abreel, where's the best place to sit? Like where can I see the orchestra the most?" So I feel like if you said any section, that would be the most like convincing thing for me, like I'd go for that.

LINDSAY: Akari, what about you? Cooper, that's similar to what you already had, so I know you like that.

AKARI: Yeah, I think with student rush tickets, they are oftentimes just leftover seats, or seats that were not bought. So I just never know what kind of seat I'm going to get with a student rush ticket. So there are many times when I had a great seat, great place to see the orchestra and hear, but I also had experience where I'm like the very top corner of the orchestra and I can barely see them, and I have to like stand the entire time, and that was not fun.

I watched the entire Mahler *Ninth Symphony* standing up. It was like this small — it was very worth it. It was with the Chicago Symphony, so it was very worth it, but it was not a fun experience to like look at that really small orchestra. And like I also wonder if I change my mind attending the concert if I knew ahead of time that that was going to be my seat. So yeah.

[1:14:35.8]

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

LINDSAY: That's a great tagline. Jonathan, you had a question.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION]

LINDSAY: So the question was, what was the first time you saw an orchestra? Was it your parents bringing you to a concert, playing in a youth orchestra, or an orchestra coming to your school for a school show, or an instrument petting zoo? William, why don't you go first? Akari has the mic. Yeah. What was your first time hearing an orchestra?

WILLIAM: I think my first time that I remember hearing an orchestra was probably when I was — when I first joined the Worcester Youth Orchestra. I think that was the first time that I had heard it. Or I remember hearing it.

[OFF-MIC QUESTION; LAUGHTER]

[1:15:55.3]

AKARI: My first time listening to an orchestra, I was very young. I come from a family of musicians. So my uncle was a flutist, principal flutist in the [UNINTEL] Symphony Orchestra in Japan. So I grew up going to concerts, and I was about — I remember I was about three years old when I decided that I want to be just like my uncle, and play the flute. But I also still remember when I was about seven years old when I went to one of the concerts and I asked one of the flutists to let me hold their instrument. And that was a very big deal. I still remember that moment. So I also think that petting zoos are a very good experience for students.

SPEAKER: The first experience I had with an orchestra was I'm guessing — was going to hear them — going to hear the Baltimore Symphony. I went to a really small school, so we never really had the opportunity for an orchestra to come and do anything at our school. But yeah, I was probably like one or two when my parents took me. I mean, they were always going to concerts, so I'm assuming I was like incredibly young.

SPEAKER: My first experience was like being in a community orchestra, and it was a small town. So it was like older musicians — or adults that weren't professional musicians. Like they just played in their free time. And I don't think my school's ever had like a petting zoo or anything. But I remember in that

community orchestra, I just asked one of the piccolo players like, “Can I see what your piccolo looks like?” Because I had never seen a piccolo before.

I was very young. And like she just let me look at it. And I feel like that was my first experience in an orchestra. And it helped that the people there were like adults that already knew about their instruments. So if I had been in a youth orchestra, like maybe I hadn’t — I wouldn’t have learned about the instruments. But like they were willing to show me and stuff.

[1:17:52.3]

SPEAKER: Yeah, and for me, that was over two decades ago, and honestly I cannot remember. So I would honestly guess that it was some type of field trip 10, 15 minutes away from our schools to go see the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, maybe the youth orchestra came to visit. But the first real exposure was me being in the flute section and being like, what the heck am I doing here? I have no idea what this is, this is not band, but here we go. So yeah, I honestly cannot remember.

But it was some kind of school event where we either went somewhere, or someone came to us. But I know that is a little tricky now because like even in Las Vegas we still have a state of emergency with bus drivers and teacher shortages. So we are still trying to figure out how to get musicians to the classrooms. So yeah, school visits are incredibly important for those lack of transportive needs and resources.

SONJA: Thank you. Wow, I wish we had a lot more time. I hope you’ll take a moment to come greet our amazing panelists after we’re done here today, or if you see them later today, please, please engage with them. But can you help us give a round of applause to our brave panelists?

[APPLAUSE]

LINDSAY: I could listen to you guys talk all day.

SONJA: You’re welcome to return to your table unless you would like to — [LAUGHING]

LINDSAY: Thank you.

SONJA: And we're almost done with our time together. So we'd like to just recap a little and leave you with a little something.

LINDSAY: So just a quick reminder of what we believe the vision 2043 is. And I think that you could sense the enthusiasm for what you all do here with our students. But this is what your future looks like in 2043. So — and that's what we believe that it is.

SONJA: So it's our hope that if you take one idea with you today, it's that where these students are in their lives right now are these formative years. And right now they love orchestras just like we do. And their experiences with orchestras are going to be deeply rooted in their lives. And they're going to carry that forward.

So we invite you to consider how you can invite them now. And encourage that love of orchestras. When we do our industry will be stronger, and they will stay linked to that love of orchestras forever. So let's not just wait and hope. Let's not wait for 2043, but let's build towards 2043 and that starts today.

LINDSAY: So we're going to leave you with one last illustration, one last little gut punch I hope. So this is your director of marketing in 10 years. This is — this person's making a two million leadership gift in 18 years. This is your operations coordinator in three years. This is your president of your board of directors in 20 years. That's your — oops. That's not your principal flute. That's your principal cello in seven years. Here's the chair of your orchestra committee in 12 years. This is the head of corporate giving at your local business headquarters in eight years.

This person is number two at the governor's office in 14 years. You know he probably will be. And these people, that's your 98% concert goers, 92% planning to donate to your orchestras very soon. So you have this window right now. Right now. You have this window right now to make that impact that is going to have that return over the course of the next starting three years when you start to hire that operations coordinator. And they're counting on you to steer the organization in the direction that they hope that they'll see you take it.

[1:22:08.8]

So we hope that you enjoyed hearing a little bit about 2043, and that you leave with a little bit of hope and vision for what you might be able to do with your orchestra. And we're just so glad that you took your morning to stay with us. So thank you very much.

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SONJA: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

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END OF TRANSCRIPT