

# Meaning More to More People 2024 Midwinter Managers Meeting

January 28, 2024

ELLEN HILL ZERINGUE: What a great introduction. I just want to say that it is — we're talking about community engagement and the way to look at things differently. I have to say that my way, road, to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and in particular the Detroit Opera was through community engagement. It wasn't that I was the vice president of marketing for the Detroit Tigers, and basically a neighbor to both institutions at Comerica Park, but because of my passion and my community engagement I actually was fundraising chair for a group of women called the Links [?], which is a national Black women's organization. We were doing the fundraiser trying to work with Wayne to see if we could buy out the house when Misty Copeland was coming, and the American Ballet Theater.

And my passion I think is for celebrating the arts and trying to raise money so that we can create more Misty's. Because the funding was going to go towards programming for more young people to get professional dance training, is how I formed a friendship with Wayne, and how Wayne eventually asked me to be a board member. And that was a huge risk because, like the vice president of marketing, not the owner of some major company, which is sort of the profile sometimes of board members. But that's what it takes, that vision that Wayne had, to say, you know what, Ellen has a different kind of capital. She's got the capital of a network of women that she's very close with, that she volunteers with. She's got the network at the Detroit Tigers.

And we did programs together with the Detroit Tigers and Detroit Opera. And the same can be said for the DSO, for bringing me on as a trustee when, I think it was Anne and I were mentors together for a mentoring group for — we mentored young women in high schools. And it was through those kinds of relationships that Anne said, "Come on and be a trustee." And it was through my long-time work with Classical Roots, because I was extraordinarily passionate about ensuring that particularly in a city like Detroit that is 70% African American, that we're giving opportunities for young people, but also just giving African Americans the opportunity to celebrate good music, and to have fun at the DSO.

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So it was through that passion that I was a trustee and there I became a member — a new sort of board member. So that's what's really important about looking at things differently, and not necessarily seeing things the way you always see things. That's how we'll all change. And now I'm changing because I've gone from working for a sports team to working for a nonprofit, so hello, I'm learning a lot. But I just wanted to make sure that I shared that perspective, and to thank Eric and to thank Wayne. Wayne in particular, who really taught me how to be a board member. And so I'm totally grateful. Thank you.

Okay, you don't want to hear about me anymore. You want to hear about — from your peers. So I'm going to call up Karisa Antonio, who is a senior director of social innovation and learning at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Trent Rash, executive director of the Missouri Symphony, and I could go on and on and on about the MOSY jokes. Mosey on up on here. [LAUGHING] And Randy Wong, president and CEO, Hawaii Youth Symphony. Welcome, welcome, welcome. I'm going to turn my mic off and turn it over to Karisa.

KARISA ANTONIO: Good afternoon. Caen to the rescue. Thank you. Caen always remembers what's missing. Great to be with you. Today, we're here to talk about how we can mean more to more people. And what I have to say to you all is that we will not mean more to more people unless and until more people mean more to us.

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You know, in orchestras, we've spent a lot of time focusing on a few people. And recently we've tried to pay attention to a few more. But it's still really about us, isn't it? And so you know, we're not alone in this. We're not alone in using people as a means to an end. People as a means to an end to our bottom line. To our diversity. People as a means to an end to our reputation. Or even our survival.

We're not alone in this. We're not alone in taking this precious word of community, and all the things that community can mean, and turning it into code for Black people, for immigrants, for low-income neighborhoods, for low budget dumbed down concerts that musicians don't have to practice for. Community. What should it really mean? Now we see the results of our efforts.

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The research shows that decades and decades of our efforts to pursue the democratization of our culture have fallen flat. We're not meaning more to more people. So what does that mean for us? So today I'm inviting you to think about what it means to center people as the heart of what community

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means. And I want to share where we are at the DSO in terms of our journey, which started a long time ago, but three and a half years ago when — I mean, we're all thinking about survival right now, aren't we?

But three and a half years ago, we were really thinking about survival. You know how many people I know that died? We didn't know if we'd do another concert. That's survival, right? But at that time the DSO said, "We want to invest in connection." And on my first day of work at the DSO, which was September 1st, 2020, Anne Parson said to me, "Karisa, the DSO needs to be a greater part of the growth and the joy of the city of Detroit."

And it was a perfect moment, and it's something that Eric, our new president and CEO has embraced and leaned into. But it was a perfect moment. And do you know why? It was because we didn't know the answer. We didn't have a program to fix that. We didn't have anything. I'd only been to Detroit one time in my life. So I had nothing to offer. Except my ability to listen.

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And to not know how to use a clicker. Oh, there we go. Okay, and I'm not talking about listening, about town halls, or focus groups, or creating a menu where people can check off things that we're okay with doing. No, I'm talking about listening to understand, and listening, where you're sitting down and you're saying, what do you want to celebrate? And what's your dream for yourself and your city? And what are the challenges that are keeping you up at night? And how could we imagine that we're here together to celebrate those challenges, and also work on — I mean, celebrate what you want to celebrate, and work on those challenges together.

That's listening. But if you listen, you can't just listen and walk away, you've got to be responsive. And this is the next part of our Detroit strategy process. Responsiveness is not what I want to do with your idea. Responsiveness is what we have to do together. But particularly in Detroit, Detroit, a city where Detroiters have been poked and prodded and studied and surveyed the hell out of. A city where people have dive-bombed Detroiters with programs that they never asked for.

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This is a city where responsiveness is needed, and it can't be done alone. It needs to be through co-design and co-implementation. Things done together. Because if you're building trust, you can't run away with someone else's dream. You've got to take that dream, and you have to say, what are we going to do together? So that — those are the elements of our Detroit strategy. And there's one more  
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element, which is evaluation. Now, I don't know about all of you, but I kind of hate the word evaluation, because it's meant for me a lot of things where I'm like, well, you can't capture that magic, like when people have that artistic experience. You can't capture that.

But what I've come to understand is that we have the responsibility to understand the impact of our work. Maybe we can't capture that musical experience, but our responsibility is to know. And I'm not just talking about like head counts, because there could be 10,000 of you here listening to me, and you might be asleep. Or you might be on your cell phone. Or maybe someone was rude to you when you came in. Or maybe this — I'm not speaking in your language.

We've got to go beyond the head count, and what's the quality of what we're doing? And beyond that, most importantly, we need to ask, and this is the most important thing, is anyone besides us better off. Is anyone better off from the things that we're doing? And these are questions that we have the responsibility to know and to ask. So this is our Detroit strategy. Listening, responsiveness, co-design, co-implementation, and evaluation. And we put this thing to a test through an initiative called Our Detroit Neighborhood Initiative, which ended up being co-designed musical experiences in neighborhoods of Detroit.

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And it was amazing. The first year we had 70 partners who worked together with us to create these events where we had DSO musicians, and we had artists from the community, from our community. We had experiences where people could express themselves through music and tell us what their experience was. But most of all we had connections. No more one-offs. Relationships between musicians and audience members, relationships between partner and partner.

Something that continues on beyond the event. So I was really excited about how this first year went, and I was talking to Alan Brown, who many of you may know, and Alan — I was so excited, I'm telling him all about this. And he was like, "Karisa, that's so great. That's really great. Did you know that you're just playing in the sandbox outside the castle?" That's what he said to me.

And you know, I like one good humiliation a day. That's kind of my quota. And — but that was a pretty big one, you know? Like he was right. These initiatives, these programs are floating off their satellites. When do they become the heart of what we do? And so that's been the work of the last couple of years, bringing that sandbox into the castle. Where we try to imbue this into all the things that we possibly can. Whether it's events, whether it's our workshops, whether it's our education. Our work with early childhood. All of the ways that we can, sinking it in.

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And what I can tell you is that over the last couple of years, through our Detroit strategy efforts, we've engaged an average of 37,000 people. And we have 233 active partners. And our students, our students are getting instruments, and they're getting bus rides, and their pictures are on the wall. And a few years back, we had maybe six percent of students who were from the city of Detroit in our education programs, and now it's getting closer to 30%.

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So these things matter. But my invitation today to all of you is whether you're an organization of two people, or 200 people, or whether you work with youth, or whether you're a professional orchestra, whatever you do, I invite you to listen. And I invite you to be responsive and to co-create. And to understand the impact of what you're doing. Because this, you can do it internally, you can do it externally, this brings us to the heart of community. And it's with this, where more people will mean more to us. Thank you.

ELLEN: Thank you, Karisa. I have a few questions for you, and I'm going to throw you off with the first one, because you've had a chance to see some of them, but I'm going to ask you something totally that I just thought about. Can you briefly describe out of the 233 active partners, can you just describe a couple of them, and maybe some of the most unique partners that one would not necessarily be a partner with the DSO?

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KARISA: Oh my goodness.

ELLEN: Did I throw you?

KARISA: No, no. I mean, they're all amazing, right? But we have people all across the scope of work. So we work with Cork Town Health, which is a health organization focused on LGBTQIA, and then we have — we're partners with Detroit Hives, which is — they're promoting beehives in the city of Detroit. And then we have, you know, folks turning parks — buying up parks or vacant lots and turning them into community parks. So I mean, it's just across — if anyone here comes to me and says, "Hey, I want to be your partner," I'm like, "I would love to be your partner, we'll find a way." You are invited to everything.

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And that's how we are in Detroit. And then we hope that people might actually want us to be there, which they do. That was a big question when we got into all of this. People were like, "Well, do people really want the orchestra here?" The answer is a resounding yes, which has been a relief to a lot of people. But the answer is yes.

ELLEN: So to build on that, can you describe some of the different audience experiences that people have encountered at your co-created events?

KARISA: I really like to think about an experience as something that we're all a part of. And sometimes we sort of feel like when we're the one producing that we're kind of like this Pez machine that pops out an experience. And like actually we're all there, like as a part of it. And so one — we've been really trying to be responsive that might look a lot of different ways. It might mean a conductor leading a concert of Latin American composers is in Spanish first and English second. It might mean featuring a local artist in the lobby so people can see them and celebrate them as they come in.

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It might mean having Detroit Harmony, Damien Crutcher, raise your hand, because if you haven't talked to this man, you need to. It might mean having a table full of instruments for students to try, and then we connect them not just to the DSO, but to all of our local music education partners, who's the right fit for this student. But I do want to say one thing about this. That to my point of that we're all a part of this experience, in that we did do this concert at Perfecting Church, which is the home of the Winans family, who is a famous gospel — I mean, I hope you all heard of them because they're amazing musicians.

Excellent. And we featured Marvin Winans as our soloist, but one thing that happened, so we had students that were like dancing in the aisles. It was like this packed house, and everybody was so excited, and kids were dancing to the William Tell Overture. And like everybody was rocking out. It was amazing. And then the Perfected Praise Choir got to sing their own piece without the orchestra, and the orchestra was sitting on stage with them. And the like went for it. I mean, it was so powerful. And then it was more powerful. And then it was like — it was an incredible musical experience.

And the transformation that I saw with our musicians was that they could see the power of this other genre, and these other musicians. And they could appreciate that. And they were transformed by a musical experience. And so that's what I mean when I say we're all in this musical experience together.

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ELLEN: So I was at that performance. And it was breathtaking. And it was one of those moments where you realize the importance of going in — that community partnership doesn't mean inviting people to you. It means going in, and also going in in an authentic way. Because what the Winans mean to the city of Detroit, and what spiritual -- and how many wonderful musicians started their careers in the church, you know? Either singing or performing. And so it was a breathtaking and brilliant night.

And to see those kids get excited about the — kids and adults and senior citizens getting excited about the DSO performing the 1812 Overture live in their church, in their community, was breathtaking. Thank you, Karisa. Okay, Trent. Mosey on up to the microphone. Okay, sorry, I'll stop. I'll stop. I'll stop with the mosey things. I'll stop.

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TRENT RASH: I love it. Thank you. First of all, I just want to say what an honor it is to be up here representing the level seven and eight orchestras. Yes to my friends out there. And I think — thank you. I think I need to tell a story about that. I am from Missouri, born and raised there in a small town of 1,800 people. And I never saw a live string instrument until I was 16 years old. And I tell this to you because I do not take for granted the work that we do, because it was not an option for me.

And I was in band, I was in choir. But this, what we do, and seeing an orchestra was not something that I was able to do. And I call that the symphonic desert, which we have in the state in which I — I reside in for sure. And that's why meaning more to our people is very special to me, because we have a huge responsibility as the Missouri Symphony, we carry the name of our state. And we are right in the middle of the state. And there's two big orchestras on the ends of the state, but we are working to serve a very large region there right in the middle of our state.

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A lot of small communities like the ones I grew up in. But when I took the job that I had in 2019, a lot of people told me that I was crazy. That the orchestra was broken. That there was no hope for it. And I thought, challenge accepted, all right, let's go. And what I found was it wasn't broken, it was fractured. But I was really shocked by how disconnected we were from our own community that we served. How many people didn't know about the Missouri Symphony? We had changed our name to MOSY, and a lot of people were still calling us by our former name, which it changed over two years before.

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And so there was a lot of work to do. And again, I pull on the fact — and thank you, you said you were going to blow it open, and you did, so thank you. I pull on the fact that, you know, being a small-town boy, I know that there was work that we could do to get more into the community. That we were sort of living in the castle that is our concert hall, and not going out to meet the people where they are. And so I started the job in August 2019, and of course March 2020 came very quickly.

And all the ideas and the goals that I had in my head were put on pause. But I'm not very patient, I'm not one that likes to wait very long. So I knew that the — our folks that do love us were missing us, and we were missing them. And so when we got into the pandemic and we were really, you know, wanting to get back with people, I thought, well, where can we go that's also hurting and that needs some love, and maybe bring a small group that we can do some things safely.

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So in the fall of 2020 we started a program called Preludes at the Pubs. And this was a program where we took small instrumental groups, string quartets, brass quintet, flute, and harp duo, and we went to — in our downtown area where we reside, we went to bars and restaurants that were really hurting as well. And that needed help. And so we said, "Hey, what's a day that would be a great day that we could come on a happy hour and maybe we could get some people to come and patronize you and hear some music?" And they were like, "Tuesday." Great, Tuesday it is.

So for — over the course of a whole month, four Tuesdays, we took a different group to a different location each week. And it went over so well, and I saw so many people I've never seen in the concert hall, people that just wanted to sit down and have a beer and listen to some music. And I saw people turn their heads and say, "Hm, I'm not used to seeing these folks here." And I saw them start to process. It was beautiful to see them think about how they could see an orchestra differently, you know? It doesn't have to exist on a fancy stage in fancy clothes, that it can exist right there at your local pub, your local brewery.

That program has grown to where we have a following of 100 plus people, the spaces are somewhat small, that follow us now, and we've been doing this now for over three years, that look forward to when we do this event. It has translated into some of them coming to the concert hall, but some of them just come to that, you know. Old Bill, he just comes and sits and watches what we're doing at Gunter Hans or at Broadway Brewery, two of our local places. And that's just what he does to enjoy the symphony in his own way. And we accept that, and we're glad to have him.

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I got off my slides already because I got so — so three years ago we were really wanting to get in touch with our Black community. And we started a program with a local reverend, Reverend James Gray, he just called me the other day actually. And he — I said, “Reverend Gray, what can we do? How can we help you?” And he said, “Well, what if we — I’m thinking about starting this Juneteenth celebration. Would you be a part of the Juneteenth celebration?” So for three years we did a Juneteenth concert in June.

That has turned out not to work very well for us because of how close it is to something we do in the summer. So this year we pivoted, and one of my board members said, “Hey, you know, I have this person that would really love for us to do something in Black History Month.” I said, “Great, what do you want to do?” So we got our music director on board, and we’re doing this Requiem for the Enslaved, which is a piece by Carlos Simon, a current contemporary Black composer.

A beautiful, beautiful piece that uses spoken word, and our spoken word artist is the Dr. Reverend Clyde Ruffin, who was the long-time theater chair at the Mizzou, our flagship college that’s in Columbia. He also is the pastor of the Second Missionary Baptist Church, which was formed by freed slaves in 1866, and is a very historic church in our community. And I said, “Reverend Ruffin, could we come? Would you be in those concert? Would you host us in your beautiful church?” And he said yes.

And so later, not this month yet, but in the middle of February we’re doing this concert over two nights in that church, and we are so honored and humbled. And his congregation has already been so supportive. Speaking of meeting people where they are, you know? The people that I’ve gotten to know in that church are so beautiful that we were inspired that before the concert, before the piece, we’re actually having a panel discussion of two individuals in their eighties and their lived Black experiences in Columbia.

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They went to our — the segregated high school, which is no longer segregated, Douglas High School. They will be speaking. We’ll have a local historian talk about the history of the Black experience in Columbia. And we’re calling this a Memorial and Reconciliatory Concert. So we can help come to terms with how that’s been for this community in our area. And this is how we’re trying to mean more to more people.

So I made Randy hungry. I was inspired. This I can credit to the League. I was inspired at last year’s mid-winters manager meeting. We were in David Geffen Hall in the mezzanine area, and we were

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talking about how our concerts have to be more than just people coming, sitting down, and watching a concert, and going home. That just does not work. We're competing with people's couches. That just cannot work now coming after the pandemic. We have to think of something different.

So I immediately went home, and being a smaller orchestra we can do things rather quickly, which is fun. And I said to my music director, "What can we do? What we can create that is going to be a more interactive experiences for people in a more intimate setting?" So we came up with Sound Bites, a music culinary experience. So what we do is pair a local celebrity chef with our music director. Last year we chose Vivaldi's Four Seasons, and each season or movement had a particular course that was inspired by that season.

So the chef would speak about why he chose what the people are about to eat, and then the people in attendance would eat that course while they were listening to that particular movement. So we were creating a very immersive, sensory experience. This year it's called Where Jazz Meets Baroque, and we're talking about the correlation between baroque music and jazz music. So we will have a chamber ensemble and an acclaimed jazz trio, and they will be performing at different times along with another catered meal.

But again, this is a way that we're trying to meet people who maybe just don't want to sit there but want something active to do. And it's — we were sold out last year, we're looking to do the same this year as well. This I already talked about because I got so excited about it. But this is the Preludes at the Pubs. This is an example of what we did with that and we're really excited to continue with that program.

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We have a conservatory. When we were founded in 1970, our founder and first conductor, Hugo Vianello, really founded the Missouri Symphony because there was a need for symphonic music education in our community. So we kind of got away from that, but in 2007 we came back to it. And we are serving — we work very closely with our school district to make sure that we are asking them, what do you not — what are you not able to offer that we can offer so that we are enriching what you are doing, and we're not trying to compete with you and the students.

So unfortunately, in our school district, there can only be strings in the orchestras. It's not the full symphonic experience. So we are able to offer the full symphonic experience for these musicians, and it's always fun because there will be string players who have never tuned to an oboe before. And so we are preparing the next round of musicians to be able to come and to be able to play. I'm very

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pleased that we also have some very wonderful donors that have created a very robust scholarship program for this so that we can find maybe new students that feel — that have barriers to instruments and lessons and being able to — thinking about the whole musician, that whole musician experience.

How can we help students to be able to be a part of that, and to close that gap? And we have a very robust scholarship program that allows us to do that. This actually takes place at the local — at Mizzou in their new Sinquefeld Music Center. So students are able to also be in a really wonderful musical setting where this can happen. And I guess my last piece is all of these things I've mentioned, none of them take place in our concert hall. Not one of them. Yes, we have concerts in our concert hall. But we do many things outside intentionally because we want to meet people where they are, where they feel safe, because only then are they going to want to come and be where we are. Thank you.

ELLEN: Oh my gosh. Okay, let me first say, Jazz Meets Baroque, I'm coming. That's like so awesome. I'm totally coming. So it sounds like you guys have sort of created this like freeing a little bit, like we have to sell tickets, we have to bring revenue into our venue, but it also feels like you guys have sort of taken away that pressure a little bit and said, okay, you know what, we want to just sort of be unique and be creative. Do you think that these efforts are bringing people into your hall?

TRENT: Yes, yes, great question. Yes, absolutely. So we decided that we really needed first and foremost was to be visible, to let people see that we make a social impact, that we are a fabric of the community. And all of these efforts I have mentioned have translated into more people coming into the concert hall, because they see us in places where they've never seen us before. And so because we're willing to take a chance on them, we have seen people come and take a chance on us.

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ELLEN: That's great. So I understand, I think you might have a very unique sort of business relationship with the business community. So I want you to quickly maybe elaborate on that. And then also, just sort of the impact of having a connected relationship with the business community and how that impacts you.

TRENT: Yeah, I'm very involved with our local chamber of commerce. I'm the co-chair of the small business committee. I'm also an ambassador, which means I get to go to all of the ribbon cuttings. I am a certified tourism ambassador for the Columbia Visitors Bureau. I'm on —

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ELLEN: That surprised me.

TRENT: [LAUGHING] I know. Me, not talking — yeah, I love talking to people. I am on some boards. I am a local emcee. I emcee a lot of events for nonprofits. I'm not afraid to do that. I don't think that's a conflict of interest. I think that only helps me. All of those things I do as an extension of MOSY. So me investing in that way is seen — I wear my MOSY pin everywhere. It's seen as an extension of the Missouri Symphony investing in the community.

And I can tell you one prime example. There was a bank that had been a long-time supporter of us, and they had kind of fallen away before I had the job. And since I've been the co-chair of the small business committee, one of their employees is a member of the committee. And she said, "Why aren't you supporting you?" And I said, "That's a great question. How about you — who can I get in front of? Who can you get me in front of?" She got me in front of the president. Turns out he plays the saxophone. And since then, now for the past two years, they have been the sponsor of our annual Young Artist Concerto Competition. So that's a prime example.

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ELLEN: That's fantastic. Thank you Trent, that was wonderful. Thank you, thank you. Okay Randy, it's on you. And don't forget to click.

RANDY WONG: All right, aloha. How are you all doing? It's great — okay, thank you. Thanks for waiting until my part. So I'm the president and CEO of Hawaii Youth Symphony, and I'm here to tell you about something that we're doing I think that is very much in concert with the other things — other strategies I've heard today, which is really, you know, community building and community engagement. And for us, we have a belief that we sourced also through like kind of a listening process, where we spoke with over 100 stakeholders, and — to give you a little bit of context, because we're a youth orchestra, and I've — so I've been there 12 years now.

And the youth orchestra organization that I inherited was very much a traditional youth orchestra, which in my — kind of my reading is, you know, let's get the best kids in and put them in the best orchestra, and put it on their resumes, and great, you know? But a lot of the youth orchestras, as they develop, end up having like kind of a pyramid of all kinds of, you know, classes and progression and so forth. And so we — upon the retirement of our music director who had been serving for 33 years, I got the board together and we said, you know, let's go through a strategic planning process.

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We brought out the great John McCann, who I know many of you know. And through about eight months of discussing and listening, and thinking, we sourced a new aspiration. A vision really, which is to make music a right. We want to make music a right and not a privilege. To get all the economic and geographic barriers you might imagine in Hawaii. We are in the middle of the ocean. We've got water boundaries that separate all the islands. And in our name, like MOSY, we have Hawaii as the entire state in our name.

So how do we get to all of those kids, and how do we get to a conversation where everyone is going to be involved and invested in that? And so that's how we came up with the idea. You know, our vision to make music a right. Like you know, what does that really mean? And to just give you an idea about it. Once we started to engage the community in conversation about making music a right, we started hearing all these great ideas. And a lot of questions, you know? Like what does it mean to make music a right?

Well okay, one way I take it is, you know, we talk about health care. Should health care be a right? Should voting be a right? You know, should public schools be a right? And so once you get involved in that conversation, you really start to think differently. And you really get to start — get a lot of ideas. And so it helped us to change our core values from, you know, let's have great kids, to also thinking about adaptability, flexibility, being entrepreneurial, being innovative, right?

And in some communities, nonprofits are thought as being, you know, slow moving, and like kind of just working to get ends to meet. We're always talking about bridging the gap between revenue and expense. And cut as many things as you can so that you can survive. And what we started to think instead was, like well why, you know? What really, really matters? And so that making music a right ideology, it started as the aspiration and the vision, but now it's our culture, it's our strategy, it's our brand.

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It's the conversation point that we engage with our stakeholders, who are students, kids, youth — donors, grantors, foundations, major, major global businesses and so forth. And you know, one thing that we did was we brought in Najean Lee from the League to talk with our students about what their role in advocacy could be. Because one thing that we know, and I — you know, is that when you ask an orchestral musician what you like about music, usually the answer that you get is something related to all the great things they did. You know, the camps, the festivals, the conservatories, the awards, all that stuff. That's why they love music.

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But really, like what is it about music that you like? Is it the opportunities that it gives you? The opportunity to travel, or to connect with other people, or to have a chance to reflect and be outside of, you know, the present-day situation. And so you know, that's a great way to engage with them, and that's a way that they can become advocates, and they can help us to talk with our lawmakers. Whether — maybe not at the federal level but at the local level, you know?

And to really advocate for why music should be present in our communities. Why there is no single definition of an audience member, and why we want to build this music thing big so that we can all fund our organizations and help the work force and so forth. So that whole thing really drives our strategy. And so on the slide you can see we've got 800 kids from all over the state. And so that means that I have to fly them into Oahu, where we're based. And we reimburse the air travel so that they can come every week or every other week to participate in the rehearsal. Not just for the concert, because we want it to be an equitable experience.

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Bring them into the process of the educational process. We have all sorts of, you know, concerts and classes. And so we're busy 52 weeks a year. We've got over 50 concerts and over 13 ensembles. In terms of fundraising strategy, because we're making music a right, that means that our earned revenue, which is, you know, ticket sales and tuition, is going to be really low. Because we don't want people to pay — to have to pay to be in the program because we want to make it a right. So therefore, everything else has to be contributed.

And what does that mean for — you're not going to do it over just grants, so you've got to get contributions, and it drives the corporate fundraising strategy. In fact, if you take a look at the QR, there's two QRs there. The first one on the left goes to our vision highlight at our Instagram, and that's pretty awesome, we've got a great team doing that. On the right though we've got an hourlong TV special that we produced. And the whole idea was let's get more eyeballs on the vision, or on the — get more eyeballs on what we're doing.

And so over the last three years we've put on broadcast TV all the NBC, CBS, ABS affiliates, and we've had close to a million eyeballs over three years looking at what HYS is all about. And we never would have had that in a gala. So anyway, that also opens obvious doors for fundraising and so forth. And yeah, that's making music a right.

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ELLEN: Okay, so music as a right. So this is obviously a very sort of tenuous political climate. Are you finding that people are understanding what you guys mean by music as a right, or do you feel like it gets people — are like, oh no, not another right? Not another thing to free people? Are you finding challenges, or is that a message that you're able to communicate and therefore engage with people on?

RANDY: I think it's a great way to engage people. There is no singular definition that I know of. And every time we talk to people, we get a different perspective. I mean, it's like, you know, for every role of somebody in an orchestra, there's an important role to play. And so every — the fact that we're not owning the definition — actually, my board chair, I love her, she says that the great thing about it is that there is no definition. There is no singular definition. And that allows us to really be flexible.

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And so when it comes to us choosing partnerships and creating programs beyond what we're doing, we go to our partners, and we just engage them in conversation about what making music a right might mean in their context. So in that first one, we were working with the Boys and Girls Clubs, and also a very impoverished public school, and you know, they said, "We'd love to have programs for our kids where it's completely free. And we'd like them to come in and have music." And we were like, okay great.

So we created a bucket drumming program, and that QR underneath that you can learn all about it. And then, you know, we've been working with Hawaii Symphony Orchestra. I'm also a bassist, a member of the HSO since it was founded 12 years ago. And so we went to them, we said, "Well, what would making music a right look like in this context?" And you know, orchestras are obviously different beasts than a Boys and Girls Club. So we thought about side-by-sides. We got two side-by-sides a year.

We've got a very innovative young stars program, which is kind of like a concerto program, but not quite. Because it allows us to bring in indigenous instruments. It allows us to bring in jazz and other folks. Like we had our jazz combo play a whole list of Charlie Parker with string arrangements with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra strings. So that was pretty sick. And then free tickets for kids that are in HYS. I mean, there are a lot of different ways. But yeah, that making music a right, it's the left, it's the center, it's everything, you know? You just talk to people about it.

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ELLEN: Can I get a t-shirt? Can I buy a t-shirt?

RANDY: Absolutely. I'll get you a t-shirt, yeah.

ELLEN: But you should sell them. Because that's a hot line from a marketing perspective. That's a hot line.

RANDY: It's awesome. Yeah, we went to — we got an award from Fast Company, the global business magazine. And they put us on their best workplaces of innovators. And in the — they also had a category for social good. And so we took top honors over like major corporations and stuff.

ELLEN: That's awesome. That's awesome.

RANDY: But the reason why I mention it is that the way that we got that was us just talking to people about making music a right. And so these editors had never heard of that strategy. Now, of course among orchestras and youth orchestras, there are a lot of folks here in this room whose organizations are champions at essentially making music a right. But we just hold them, you know?

ELLEN: That's awesome. That's fantastic. I just have to ask one quick follow up question. You said you have to fly the kids in every week. You've got to explain that please.

RANDY: Yeah, so we live in Honolulu, and the kids from the other islands, you know, they come from Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, Hawaii Island. And they got to fly in. And it's a whole thing. You've got to go through TSA and everything. And so it's a real interesting — I think it's evidence of the commitment that they want to make to music. And it's cyclical, because we're making that investment in them.

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And so you know, the roundtrips are probably like \$200, \$250 each. And we will — it's part of our commitment. It's right in our vision, and it's right in our name. You know, Hawaii Youth Symphony. So we really have to act on that.

ELLEN: That is really amazing, and you are— that is an incredible commitment.

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### END OF TRANSCRIPT ###