



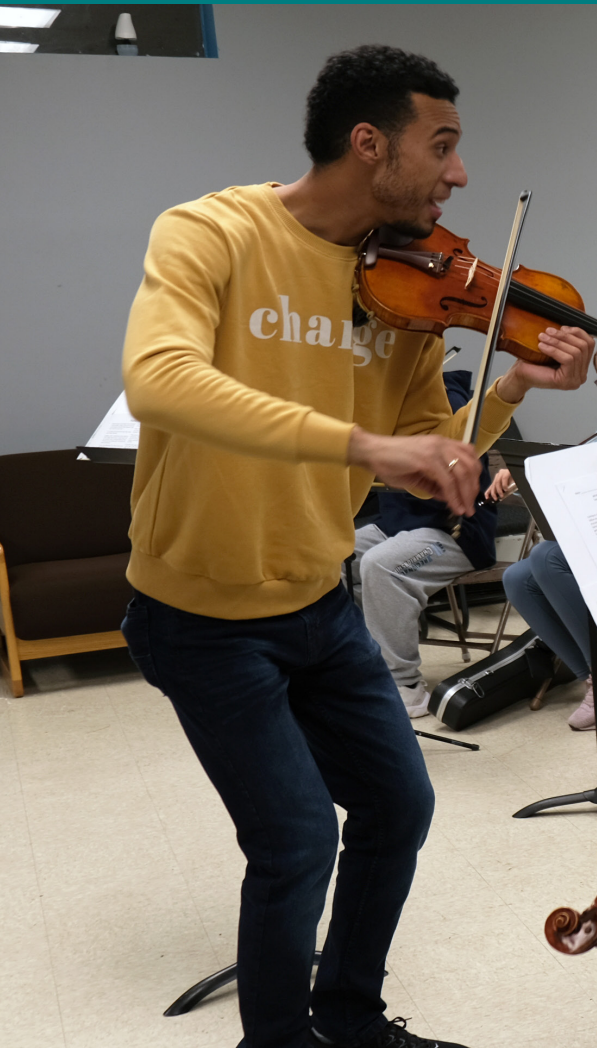
# Catalyst Guide

Youth Engagement and  
the Future of Orchestras

By Theodore Wiprud with Dr. Karen Yair,  
Megan Delatour, and Suzanne Perrino

League  
of American  
Orchestras





Mid-season rehearsals at the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies. Photo courtesy of Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.



COVER PHOTO:  
Students rehearsing with South Dakota Symphony Orchestra musicians on new compositions by Zjhamere Richardson, written as part of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's Music Composition Academy program. Photo by Connor Gibbs. Photo courtesy of Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.

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The Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies. Spring Festival concerts at Orchestra Hall.  
Photo courtesy of Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.







## Foreword from Contributing Authors

### Megan Delatour

Many conversations about youth engagement in orchestras center on the need to pull in young people to secure the survival of the orchestra. But in reality, we must ask ourselves: what can an orchestra do for young people?

The purpose of an orchestra is to share, create, and uplift through our instruments, establishing and preserving a sense of community. Young people, as part of this community, should be afforded the opportunity to share and create. An orchestra can provide young people with the tools to succeed and the chance to thrive.

This guide shares examples of student-centered learning, advocacy, and mental-health awareness, as well as wisdom from changemakers about what it is to empower youth in musical spaces. We hope that orchestras can use this information to foster inclusivity and create the means for young people to find their voices.

#### **Megan Delatour**

*Orchestra Director,  
Talent Unlimited High School*

*Artistic Director, InterSchool Orchestras of  
New York at Third Street Music School*

### Suzanne Perrino

What a wonderful opportunity to learn from each other. In this guide, you will find a wide spectrum of programming, ways of interacting authentically with youth, and words of hope and gratitude from young people who are finding ways to express themselves freely and find belonging in safe and creative spaces.


The concert hall is now only one resource among many for music learning. From virtual platforms to physical spaces in shelters, museums, and tribal reservations, to the rich engagement of teaching artists, this larger ecosystem encompasses a vast network of providers and partners. So the question looms—what should the role of professional orchestras become in the lives of young people?

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the United States, it seems an ideal time to reflect both internally and externally. How will we incorporate youth in our celebrations? What music will we perform, what artists will we engage, and what stories will we tell? What voices will we seek out and how will we balance emerging and legacy artists and composers? How will we embrace of, by, and for the people, including our youth?

#### **Suzanne Perrino**

*Senior Vice President,  
Learning and Engagement,  
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra*





The majority (73%) of professional U.S. orchestras offer Education and Community Engagement (EdCE) programs to their communities, and there are an estimated 400 youth orchestras operating across the country.

**Read more in [Orchestras at a Glance](#).**

## Introduction

As orchestras work toward greater equity, diversity, and inclusion, can any group be more important to the future of the art form than youth? Each successive generation of Americans is more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity,<sup>1</sup> sexual orientation, and gender identity,<sup>2</sup> and each is increasingly concerned for equity in the workplace.<sup>3</sup> To engage with Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012, now in their teens and twenties) is to engage with the diversity of our communities, and to face up to our shortcomings when it comes to inclusion. Younger and more diverse generations expect us to up our game. And when we do, we can expect to see transformation, both in our institutions and in our art form.

Through an **educational** lens, orchestras have already done much creative and effective work in concerts for families and schools, classroom residencies, coaching for young musicians, and so much more. But through an **inclusion** lens, many have a long way to go in attracting and cultivating future musicians, leaders, and audiences from all backgrounds in ways that respect and help to address the serious challenges faced by today's youth.

This Catalyst Guide from the League of American Orchestras shows the steps that League member orchestras are taking to center youth creativity, empower youth voices, and develop pathways to careers onstage and off, all while communicating with young people on their own terms. These are forms of inclusion that combat “adulthood” (the devaluing or patronization of young people’s views and contributions) and that can unlock the new thinking needed by our institutions if we are to remain vibrant and relevant.

Students in grades 3 - 5 experiencing San Diego Symphony's School Concert at The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park. Photo by Gary Payne.



# Key Takeaways

## Empowering Youth by Fostering Growth and Inclusion

Youth, professional, and community orchestras all have the ability to foster young people's growth as artists and leaders, in ways that promote ownership of the artform and an authentic sense of belonging. By building trust, respect, and collaboration through music, orchestras help create inclusive communities where each individual's experiences, identities, and interests are honored. Using approaches such as student-centered teaching and Creative Youth Development can empower young people to find their authentic voices and build agency and confidence alongside musical competence.

Read more in [Chapter 2: Youth Experience](#)

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## Securing the Future Through Youth Engagement

Professional and community orchestras that actively engage and welcome youth are not only performing a vital civic service, but are also ensuring their own future vibrancy, sustainability, and relevance. Connecting with young people, adapting to their needs, and learning from their worldviews can elevate our organizations, ensure our relevance in a rapidly changing landscape, and transform the future of the art form itself. Now is the time to bring the whole organization together to authentically and consistently embrace new generations and explore what makes us truly valuable to the communities we serve.

Read more in [Chapter 1: Why Youth Engagement?](#), [Chapter 6: Evaluating Impact](#), and [Chapter 7: Communicating with Gen Z](#)

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## Inclusivity: The Foundation of Youth Engagement

Inclusivity and belonging are critical to all efforts to engage a youth population that is increasingly diverse in terms of race, sexual identity, and gender orientation, and that is focused on new socio-economic priorities. Youth orchestras often lead the way in this work.

Read more in [Chapter 2: Youth Experience](#)

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## Empowering Youth Voices in Orchestras

Youth orchestras place young people's individual interests and identities at the heart of their programs, and many professional and community orchestras are now following their example. As a result, youth are not only shaping their own learning journeys but are also inspiring new initiatives and innovative artistic works. In the most progressive orchestras, young people are contributing fresh perspectives to management and governance or composing fresh new works, becoming vital changemakers where they're needed most. Furthermore, some orchestras are creating inclusive pathways for young people towards both musician and management roles, ensuring a future for the field that is diverse, dynamic, and bold.

Read more in [Chapter 2: Youth Experience](#) and [Chapter 4: Broadening Opportunity](#)



## Creating Safe Spaces and Building Trust

Youth, professional, and community orchestras all have a responsibility to foster a safe environment for the youth they serve, especially considering the mental health challenges faced by many young people and the ongoing marginalization of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. It is essential to continually evaluate the impact of our efforts on each individual's life and to implement trauma-informed practices that protect today's youth. Collaborating with other organizations trusted by young people is crucial for our success—these partnerships not only provide critical expertise and broaden the opportunities we can offer, but also help us establish a safe, supportive environment and build trust.

Read more in [Chapter 3: Mental Health](#) and [Chapter 5: Partnerships](#)

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## Transforming Orchestras Through Youth Engagement

Prioritizing effective youth engagement can significantly transform professional and community orchestras for the better. The expertise of education and community engagement (EdCE) staff in listening to and responding to young people's needs can enhance many aspects of orchestra operations, from audience experience and marketing to strategic planning. To realize this potential, strong leadership is essential, along with a thorough assessment of departmental needs and a commitment to balancing tradition with the need for change.

Read more in [Chapter 7: Communicating with Gen Z](#) and [Chapter 8: Integrating Youth Engagement](#)

The Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies. Spring Festival concerts at Orchestra Hall.  
Photo courtesy of Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.





A counselor and two students perform together at a Pacific Symphony arts-X-press program concert. Photo by Adam Kirchoff.



## Chapter 1: Why Youth Engagement?

There are three key reasons why youth engagement is central to the future of orchestras. First, it's a moral imperative to provide young people with equitable engagement with the orchestral art form. "We're working with an education system that was not designed for all young people to have equitable resources," notes [Gary Padmore](#), Vice President, Education and Community Engagement at the **New York Philharmonic**. "Our work is not just supplementing but truly creating awareness of systemic issues and how they can change."

Second, it's a creative imperative. Ultimately, this is about building a future stronger and more dynamic than our present. How can we give youth the chance to create their own emotional connection to orchestral music? How can youth help us build the future of our art?

Third, it's a business imperative: American orchestras need young people representing the full diversity of all Americans. Plenty of young people are clamoring to get involved as players, staff, audience, and donors, inspired to help us evolve and remain relevant from within.

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There is strong market demand for orchestra performances featuring young musicians. In fact, across both classical and pops audiences, two thirds of all ticket buyers say they would like to see young, local musicians regularly performing on stage with the orchestra, regardless of whether they attend classical or pops performances. Find out more from the League's [on-demand webinar](#) reporting on WolfBrown's Audience Tastes and Preferences Survey, produced in partnership with the League.



A 2023 survey of over 500 young classical musicians from about 30 youth orchestras and college music programs paints a telling portrait of Gen Z's most orchestra-oriented members. [Lindsey Nova](#), Executive Director of **Three Rivers Young People's Orchestras** in Pittsburgh, and [Sonja Thoms](#), Executive Director of the **Wheeling Symphony** in West Virginia and Founder of the next-generation orchestra leadership organization [OrchestraCareers.com](#), designed the survey and presented results at the [2023 National Conference of the League of American Orchestras](#).

Key findings are promising: two-thirds of respondents had interest in or a primary goal of becoming a professional musician, just under half had interest in or the goal of becoming orchestra staff, and almost all aim to become audience members and donors. But the open-ended responses offer critiques. Many called for professional and community orchestras to do more to diversify repertoire, orchestra musicians, and guest artists, and to communicate more effectively with younger people

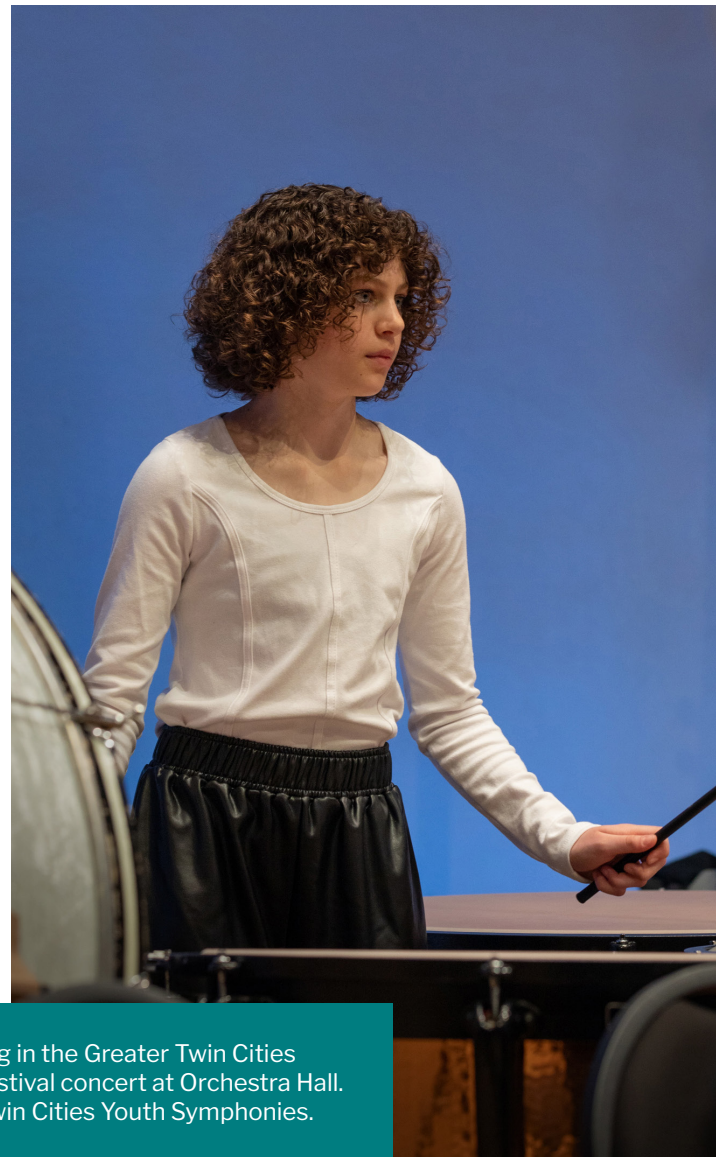
Reflecting on the survey, Nova urges orchestras to take young people seriously. "It's such a no-brainer. Get them in early and you'll have them forever."

While Nova and Thoms' survey results can't be analyzed by racial/ethnic group, there are signs that students from all backgrounds are not yet equally bought in. Young BIPOC musicians in the orchestra program at the Talent Unlimited Performing Arts High School in New York City recently talked with our co-author Megan Delatour, director of the program and an alumna of the League's Essentials of Orchestra Management Program. Did the young musicians want to be in a major U.S. orchestra one day? Based on what they'd seen, their answer was no: they did not feel seen by these institutions. Delatour reported the students' insights to the League of American Orchestras board. The students' response illustrates that, as with all equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work, authentic and inclusive youth engagement takes humility, focused effort, and field-wide efforts to address under-representation and exclusion.

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If you can pause long enough to hear where [young people] are genuinely at, what they are excited by and concerned about, what they imagine for their own lives, you can discover overlap. Finding shared interests, experimenting with young people, discovering areas of your own interest that resonate with genuine interest of young people—that's ethical and productive.

***Eric Booth**, Author, Consultant, Arts Learning Program Designer*



A young timpanist performing in the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies Spring Festival concert at Orchestra Hall. Photo courtesy of Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.





Students rehearsing with South Dakota Symphony Orchestra musicians on new compositions written as part of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's Music Composition Academy program. Photo by Connor Gibbs.



## Chapter 2: Youth Experience

**YOSA (Youth Orchestras of San Antonio)**'s Sara Vicinaiz was once titled Operations Director; she is now Director of Student Experience. As she explains, the job is about much more than chairs and stands. "We do everything we can to make sure our students have a great experience, feel safe, and know they belong." Similar positions are being defined at many youth orchestras. [Amy Chung](#), Executive Director of **Houston Youth Symphony**, notes that among her many constituents, parents can become an overly dominant voice. So HYS recently put student voices into its strategic plan, "so students can be heard, and not just on stage."



## Fostering Inclusion

[Rebecca Calos](#), Executive Director of the **Empire State Youth Orchestra** in Albany, NY, says that “there’s been a radical change over the last decade in order to address inclusivity.” A teen’s experience of feeling included can have as much to do with cliques as with race or gender. “We start each season with an inclusive experience, not something like talking about summer travels, but something involving humor and collaborative work, that sets the tone for rehearsals.” For instance, she describes sending students throughout the building hunting for fragments of a score that they then work together to reconstruct.

**Houston Youth Symphony**, like many youth orchestras today, now sports gender-neutral concert dress and includes pronouns on name tags.

[Alison Levinson](#) directs arts-X-press, a summer multi-arts program at the **Pacific Symphony**. She notes that true inclusivity requires broad participation, bringing together children of families of all income levels. “It’s about everyone being exposed to an inclusive community. You are who are, you’re not solely a representative of your community.” She also says it’s important to model inclusivity at the staff level, with staff members of many different backgrounds sharing in leadership.

## Student-Centered Teaching

A student-centered educator’s goal is to give students the tools to be successful in finding their own voices. Teaching that builds out from students’ own interests, experiences, and identities in this way puts down deeper roots, engenders more enthusiasm, and builds more confidence than the conventional “empty vessel” approach that situates the learner solely as a recipient of knowledge.

As described by [Eric Booth](#), student-centered teaching means “attending to the learner’s organic impulses, what intrinsically motivates a learner, attending to what they have going in their self-directed learning lives; leaving room for young people to find their own meaning in music.” Approaching it with inclusivity top of mind means respecting and responding to each student’s individual background and identity. Music educator and philosopher [David J. Elliot](#) notes that student-centered learning is inherently multicultural and therefore we must create learning environments that reflect that.

“The traditional model is that kids are recipients of information the conductor imparts,” says [Rebecca Calos](#) at **Empire State Youth Orchestra**. But the traditional model is open to change. Calos describes how Music Director [Etienne Abelin](#) challenges the stereotype of the maestro as unquestioned leader by inviting the young musicians to make repertoire suggestions and have conversations about his choices, treating them as collaborators. “Improvisation, conductorless pieces, enabling them to communicate among themselves—it changes how students come into rehearsal,” she says. Such leadership reflects a broader evolution in musical training to replace the power dynamics that can breed abusive behavior by leaders and instructors with a safer, collectively owned space for artistic expression and learning.

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Read about inclusivity at the Chicago City Youth Orchestras in [Catalyst Snapshots: EDI Case Studies from American Orchestras](#)

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Read about the progress that youth orchestras are making towards repertoire diversification in the [Orchestra Repertoire Report](#) from the [Institute for Composer Diversity](#), produced in partnership with the League of American Orchestras



Auburn Symphony Orchestra's Principal Violist Betty Agent and Principal Cello Brian Wharton engage young visitors to the Auburn Public Library. Photo courtesy of the Auburn Symphony Orchestra.

## Teaching Artists

As practicing, professional artists who have dual careers as educators,<sup>4</sup> often in classroom settings, teaching artists are recognized for developing student-centered teaching to a high degree in youth, professional, and community orchestras. (See the [2023 Symphony feature on teaching artistry](#).) Stemming from the work of philosophers [John Dewey](#) and [Maxine Greene](#), teaching artistry involves specific training distinct from the studio pedagogy known by most orchestral musicians. Some orchestras, mostly in large urban areas with freelance musicians, have had dedicated faculties of teaching artists for many years. Other orchestras deploy their own musicians for in-school work, with or without extra training.

“An unfortunately small percentage of orchestra musicians are actually curious about the work we do as teaching artists,” admits [Eric Booth](#). “There’s little to encourage their curiosity and interest. The challenge is adapting what you know toward a new purpose—and that’s required to succeed with young people.” But with training and honest feedback, the

payoff can be tremendous. “If you put the musicians in situations where they can succeed,” says Booth, “it has a ripple effect on the whole orchestra.”

[Suzanne Perrino](#) at the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** engages teaching artists only for specific projects, but she can tell the difference. “A teaching artist changes the culture of the organization,” she says, as musicians become aware of their expanded skill set.

Perrino describes the impact of focused professional development not just for musicians, but also for staff and volunteers, in the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra’s Sensory-Friendly Concerts. “Those concerts have [also] really changed the culture of the organization,” she says, citing the myriad ways the orchestra and the hall have become more accessible to all kinds of neurodiversity. She works with [Roger Ideishi](#) of George Washington University to deliver trainings and has taken these trainings to other orchestras as well. (See the [2020 League Conference session on sensory-friendly concerts featuring Dr. Ideishi](#).)

“We are most successful when we learn and grow alongside our students. Listening and responsiveness guide us in the pursuit of student well-being, superseding assumptions around age, race, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or place of residence. Our work at the DSO centers people as the experts in their own experience.”

*Karisa Antonio, Senior Director of Social Innovation and Learning, Detroit Symphony Orchestra*



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## Empowering Youth Voices

Youth orchestras have naturally shown the way in centering youth voice, but professional and community orchestras can apply similar ideas. The **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** has gone so far as to invite students to create their own program.

As [Karisa Antonio](#), Senior Director of Social Innovation and Learning at the DSO, explains, “we originally thought of it as a pathway [conservatory preparation] program. But because of the listening and engagement we’ve done through the [Detroit Strategy](#), we realized we need to be more responsive to youth. Why not have students design it?” Her team met with a half-dozen 12- to 14-year-old musicians, ideating what sort of program they would look forward to participating in. The process took six months.

The result is Senza (referring to a goal of learning and growing without barriers and without assumptions): a student-driven, student-responsive professional development program. The musical growth of Senza students is supported through the DSO’s Civic Youth Ensembles (CYE), chamber music, and private lessons. But the program goes far beyond the traditional model of music education. The Senza team works to identify students’ unique areas of interest, matching them with valuable resources, experiences, and networks. Instruments are provided if needed. Students meet with a student support coach for personal and musical goal setting, time management, college preparation, and personal support. The cohort of 18-20 students provides valuable peer support. Students perform together and participate in community service and field trips.

One trumpet student, Timothy, who was among the middle schoolers who helped design Senza, started off in the CYE entry-level wind group. The Senza team noticed his do-it-yourself animation efforts. They connected him with weekly animation lessons, taking advantage of flexibility in program funding. Timothy’s talent blossomed, and now his YouTube channel videos, featuring compositions and animations, have thousands of views. This summer, Timothy was accepted into Interlochen Arts Academy to study animation for his senior year of high school. His trumpet playing has also flourished, and at Interlochen he plays in the jazz orchestra.

“There is a universe of possibility that opens up when you pay attention to students,” says Antonio. “We must hear them, see them, walk with them, and open every door to make a way for them in the world.”

At the **San Diego Symphony**, Vice President for Impact and Innovation [Laura Reynolds](#) describes something similar in designing elementary classroom residencies tied to school concerts. She gathered advisers (music teachers, classroom teachers, ESL and special education teachers) to create a program that works for all. They asked, “how can we give students agency and voice in every respect? How can it be less about teachers leading?” She commissioned a graphic novel to be read together and dramatized as a class, leading into workshops with visiting chamber ensembles. When it came to the orchestra concert, Reynolds reports “kids really participated in the event—the shift in engagement was notable.” Instead of writing traditional thank-you letters, students wrote critiques which are helping to shape the program’s next iteration.

New York City’s **Talent Unlimited High School** encourages “courageous conversations,” which [Megan Delatour](#) describes as providing spaces where all perspectives can be heard, and all members of the community can feel seen. For a school community that is 80% BIPOC, this is particularly important. “The [conversations are] sometimes difficult, but transparency is important,” Delatour says. “We need to be honest about the possibilities in this field. If we sugarcoat it, that just sets young people up for failure. The polite version of what they say is, ‘We’re not stupid. We do not think that we will solve every problem in the music world in one week, month, or even year. But we want to be involved in those ongoing conversations even if they span years. That tells us that the work is being done and our voices are being considered in the solution.’”

## Creative Youth Development

Creative Youth Development (CYD) takes student-centered learning further still, having emerged in recent years as a particularly powerful approach that fully embodies a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion within youth arts work. Recognizing the challenges faced by young people disadvantaged by systemic racism and inter-generational trauma, CYD often directly addresses racial equity and social justice in youth-led creative projects, while “supporting young people’s stories, ideas, and dreams through creative expression and honoring their lived experience.”

A good example of CYD in the orchestra world is the **South Dakota Symphony Orchestra’s** Music Composition Academy (MCA). Modeled on the **New York Philharmonic’s** Very Young Composers Program, the MCA was founded in 2017 specifically to serve students ages 14-18 from reservations in the eastern and western sides of the state. “It’s really about deep impact,” says SDSO Executive Director [Jennifer Teisinger](#).

Compared with the SDSO’s traditional education programs in Sioux Falls, “the difference with MCA is that it is engaging students from tribal communities. And, because the instruction is on a 3-4 student to 1 composer-mentor ratio, the students’ creative development is rich and, for some, transformative.” Some of the teen composers take the opportunity to deal in a healthy, creative way with emotions resulting from intergenerational racial trauma. “Beyond the musical and emotional growth of the students, SDSO is now also building trust with these students and their families,” Teisinger adds. Each fall, musicians of the SDSO play the string quartets and wind quintets students have composed during the summer, both at public events and in schools where every participating student attends, and the student composers introduce their music to the audience. The idea is thus shared with hundreds of the composers’ peers that everyone is creative, and that with hard work everyone can achieve beautiful results.



The YOSA (Youth Orchestras of San Antonio) Student Experience team in Summer 2024. Photo by Pam De La Mora.

Back row L-R: Andrew Walker (Interim Enrollment Manager), Eric Peterson (Production Manager), Gary Fair (Pathway Programs Coordinator), Jacob Eddy (YOSA Intern), Blake Bryan (YOSA Intern)

Front row L-R: Tessa Gartin (Student Experience Coordinator), Sara Vicinaiz (Director of Student Experience), JD Garcia (Enrollment Manager)



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## Youth Councils

Developing young leaders is not only an investment in future generations; it provides real benefit in the here and now, with youth perspectives and ingenuity suggesting new directions. The [Youth Leadership Program](#) of the **Empire State Youth Orchestra** supports its orchestra members in projects like creating an outdoor Soundwalk or hosting virtual residencies at nursing homes and hospitals. The program's Ambassador track provides training for public speaking and recruitment presentations, and two youth Ambassadors are even chosen to serve as non-voting members on the board of directors. "They get Finance 101—how to balance a budget, how to make decisions—and it's their favorite workshop every year," says [Rebecca Calos](#). "They come to the table with a passion and a serious desire to be part of what's happening. It's changed everything," even the mission statement. In a strategic planning process, the young delegates found words like *rigorous* to have negative connotations. They pared the whole thing down to "ESYO engages, inspires, and empowers through music." And it stuck.

Ankur Senpati was among the first of the Ambassadors at ESYO, and a Youth Board Representative. "I was surprised at how relaxed the board meetings were," he reports. "And how welcoming they were, how they took my opinions and incorporated them." Senpati, who has just graduated from ESYO and is going to college to study computer engineering, says he definitely plans to serve on orchestra boards as an adult. "I've realized that different perspectives are important. We need to listen and understand each perspective. That's a skill I've learned, the biggest thing I got out of it."

The **League of American Orchestras** has also launched a [Student Leadership Council](#) (SLC) to bring youth perspective to its national work. Five high school, college, and graduate students were selected for its first cohort, and were paired with professionals in the field based on their career aspirations. The Council meets quarterly to help strategize growth of the League's Student Constituency and plan League Conference content for that group. What's more, its members have co-designed and spoken at a League Conference session and contributed essays to a [Symphony magazine article](#). One has spoken with League donors and another serves on the League's Finance and HR Resource Center Advisory Group.

[Lorin Green](#), an inaugural council member who now works at the **Seattle Symphony**, says "it's important to have the voices of students represented. We may not have 30 years of executive experience, but we see different things from a different perspective that are needed." The most important factor in making the council work, she says, is for the institution actually to listen. As an African American, she says, "I have been asked to be the one person-of-color or student voice in various situations, but I rarely see that they value my voice as much as others." Green was pleased to see League President Simon Woods at the Student Leadership Council's session at the 2024 League Conference. "A lot of orchestras would benefit from having more youth perspective," says Green. "The League is setting the example and saying, 'if we benefit, so will you.'"

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We tend to think about youth or different populations in big buckets. We really have to think of individuals. We like to compartmentalize, but we're in a more messy time. We have to become more comfortable with being uncomfortable and get over our obsession with perfectionism. We have to be able to take risks and interact with people on a human level.

*Suzanne Perrino, Senior Vice President of Learning and Engagement,  
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra*



“There is a universe of possibility that opens up when you pay attention to students. We must hear them, see them, walk with them, and open every door to make a way for them in the world.”

– Karisa Antonio, Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Photo by Adam Kirchoff.



## Chapter 3: Mental Health

“As inspiring as working with youth can be, we also need to understand how great a responsibility it is,” says [Caen Thomason-Redus](#), Vice President for Inclusion and Learning at the League. “We cannot assume that all our efforts have their intended effect. Part of our work is to learn and apply things like trauma-informed practices, and devote the resources needed to answer the question, ‘what difference are we making in this young person’s life?’ This is the only way we can achieve our goal of making music a positive force for all youth.”

The COVID-19 pandemic’s isolation, intentionally addictive social media, and the climate crisis are only the most glaring contributors to what the Surgeon General has identified as a growing national concern: youth mental health.<sup>6</sup> Programs that center youth creativity and build youth agency can help students cope in healthy ways and

flourish despite their challenges. But encouraging students to express themselves musically can also lead to painful revelations, and trauma-informed approaches to youth engagement must be in place if youth-serving organizations are to avoid inadvertently causing further harm. The **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** is so far an outlier in having hired a licensed social worker on staff who can help deal with crisis situations and find ways to support the whole child.

Training in trauma-informed practice is available from a variety of educational organizations.<sup>7</sup> As more orchestras move into high-impact, student-centered work like the examples in [Chapter 2](#), it is critical they ensure their staff and teaching artists have both the skills and resources to keep their students safe from re-traumatization and to deal appropriately with situations that arise.





The San Diego Symphony learns from its High School Ambassadors, regularly implementing their suggestions for improving the concert experience. Shown here: High School Ambassadors from the Summer 2024 program. Photo by Shea Perry.



## Chapter 4: Broadening Opportunity

Aiming to engage young people from all backgrounds in high-quality musical training, many tuition-free programs modeled on Venezuela's [El Sistema](#) have launched around the country, and many youth orchestras have initiated their own non-audition, tuition-free ensembles and lessons. Many are connected through **El Sistema USA**. The **Empire State Youth Orchestra** established CHIME three years ago to address a dearth of students from urban (rather than suburban) neighborhoods; CHIME now boasts 170 students, with the school district chipping in for transportation. **Houston Youth Symphony**

launched the Coda Music Program nine years ago; its students are 99% Black or Brown. **Three Rivers Young People's Symphony** created Tutti two years ago to serve more diverse populations. Whether or not students in these programs continue into audition-only youth ensembles, organizations report that students come away with valuable experiences and friendships. "Although it's important, our mission is not to diversify concert stages, but to create exceptional programs," says Houston Youth Symphony's Amy Chung.



## Creating Pathways to Conservatory

In recent years, many kinds of institutions concerned with young people's musical training have begun to link up to create "pathways" (a term many prefer over "pipelines," which has an extractive connotation) leading toward admission to conservatory. These institutions want to level the playing field between students whose families can and will support all their musical needs, and those unlikely to imagine advanced study or a career in classical music. Increasingly, orchestras look to pathways organizations to help increase diversity in conservatories, and in turn to increase diversity among those who take orchestra auditions.

The **Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth (PMAY)**, now in its eighth year, was among the first of these pathways organizations. Its eight partner organizations include core partners such as **Settlement Music School** and the **Philadelphia Youth Orchestra**, and affiliate partners such as the **Philadelphia Orchestra**. PMAY Director [Najib Wong](#) says that "as a biracial person who wanted to be a professional trumpet player, I was always having an experience of being othered. It's difficult when you don't see people like you onstage or among gatekeepers. So the work of PMAY is crucial to provide support from a young age so BIPOC musicians understand how to navigate this field." By centralizing financial aid to follow the student rather than the institution, and advising on summer programs and important auditions, PMAY has helped guide young people into many of America's top conservatories. "As we graduate more students," Wong adds, "there will be bigger [BIPOC] networks to receive them."

[Stanford Thompson](#), also a trumpet player and himself a product of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Talent Development Program, is Executive Director of **Equity Arc**, which among other things is a national convener of pathways programs like PMAY. "At the end of the day," he emphasizes, "young musicians have to practice and get good. That's the number one priority. And the support they need also has to address their unique personal situations." But youth-focused organizations cannot solve orchestras' diversity problem alone. "My theory of change," says Thompson, "is focused on orchestras adjusting their policies and practices, so that more mentoring and advancement opportunities

can be earned by the growing number of underrepresented musicians eager to join professional stages."

More orchestras are becoming part of such pathways initiatives. The **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** is preparing to launch a Music Learning Catalyst to strengthen the music-learning ecosystem in Pittsburgh. The initiative will bring youth-serving music organizations together around advocacy and create pathways for talent development and broader access, potentially redeveloping Heinz Hall as a central facility for youth music. [Suzanne Perrino](#) imagines families coming and going, and children growing up comfortable with Heinz Hall.

[Gary Padmore](#) at the **New York Philharmonic** lauds the success of a project last spring, in which incoming Music Director Designate Gustavo Dudamel conducted high school musicians from partner organizations across all five boroughs of New York City. It's part of a five-year plan to expand work with youth organizations. "One student [of 26 onstage] who played in our Spring Gala conducted by Dudamel was a hardworking young musician from Coop City in the Bronx who never had a private lesson. But he got accepted to Eastman, and we got him placed with [NY Phil principal bassist] Tim Cobb." Padmore's vision is to build out the ecosystem of youth performing organizations, and eventually to help develop music teachers and administrators as well as players.

New York Philharmonic Very Young Composer David Wright (age 10) is celebrated by Maestro Gustavo Dudamel and members of its youth orchestra initiative following the performance of David's new work, *Tarzan's Rage*. Photo by Erin Baiano.







Young musicians at the Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth (PMAY) Artists Showcase Concert 2023. Photo courtesy of PMAY Artists' Initiative and Rec. Today.

## Leadership Training

For [Daniel Trahey](#) at **El Sistema USA**'s Youth Ambassador Program, EDI and youth engagement are the same thing. Daniel asks, "how can we train kids to do more content work? Teaching, advocating, congregating peers, public speaking? The best results are people who can teach *and* lead *and* play."

The Youth Ambassador program is scaffolded, with adults coaching youth leaders who are giving workshops to those just a bit younger. Gradually, they take on more responsibility. "This is really what kids were doing a hundred years ago," says Trahey, helping raise their younger siblings. "The difference is we train students and back them up with infrastructure, ready to support any failures." Also helpful: the program pays students a stipend.

The **San Diego Symphony's** High School Ambassadors program is a paid summer internship that includes front-of-house work. "Students get to practice what it is to work in a performing arts institution," says [Laura Reynolds](#). Their capstone project is designing a concert based on conversations and mentorship with staff in artistic planning, operations, marketing, personnel, financial literacy, interviewing skills, and more. Staff and board are invited to hear the concert and sometimes come away with fresh ideas for their own work. SDS surveys students throughout the program, asking what advice they have for the next cohort and for staff. "Every year we've actually implemented change as a result," says Reynolds, "like the timing of when speakers come to class, and the number of team building activities. We learn from youth across the institution." Accepting 30 students each summer, High School Ambassadors is now in such heavy demand that Reynolds and her team have implemented blind applications, while weighing the results to assure geographic and socioeconomic spread.

At the **Pacific Symphony's** arts-X-press camp, [Alison Levinson](#) has built up a cadre of counselors that are alumni of the program; they return to give back and they match the diversity of the camp itself. More experienced counselors help train new ones, and eventually they grow into senior staff. Says Levinson, "we need more artist-leaders. Whether they go into the arts or not, just having that sense of creativity will set them up to navigate complexities in the future."

Finally, **The Lewis Prize for Music** is dedicated to promoting youth voices to drive positive change in society. "Having heard often at League, Cleveland Orchestra, and Florida Philharmonic board meetings about the lack of music education in the schools negatively impacting attendance at orchestra concerts, I decided to focus on youth development through music and arts," says Daniel Lewis, Founder and Chairman. "What is available in schools too often doesn't reflect the culture and heritage of the young people being taught. Creative Youth development (CYD) programs are shifting this. At The Lewis Prize for Music, we support CYD programs focused on systems change, with clear visions for improving their communities guided by the experience and leadership of their young artists. Grant recipients provide a wide range of direct services beyond teaching music, are dedicated to achieving access for all youth, and collaborate and evaluate themselves against clear objectives. We've only received a handful of applications from orchestras and youth orchestras that moved to our second round by demonstrating these characteristics. This remains an immense opportunity for orchestras to become more impactful and relevant to the communities that support them."





Local student ensembles regularly animate the lobby of Dreyfoos Hall, home to the Palm Beach Symphony. Here, a pre-concert performance features the Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts Strings Chamber Ensemble, with Orchestra Director Jeffrey Adkins. Photo by IndieHouse Films.



## Chapter 5: Partnerships

Gaining the trust of local young people, learning about their needs, and responding to their interests with relevant programmatic offerings is work that is often best achieved in partnership with schools and other youth-serving organizations.

“The biggest piece for orchestras is the partnership piece,” says [Gary Padmore](#) at the **New York Philharmonic**. “Oftentimes we position ourselves to be the solution for the community. The solution actually lives within the community. We just need to figure out a way to use our platform to amplify those solutions. If we’re not bringing in the collective, we’re bringing back the savior image.”

The **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** is a prolific partner. [Karisa Antonio](#) pegs at 84 the number of DSO partners creating opportunities for youth.

These include the Motown Museum for students who are interested in voice training, and Michigan State University’s Community Music School-Detroit for those wanting private lessons. Detroit Suzuki, Crescendo Detroit, Sphinx, Living Arts, and many other organizations in Detroit team up to make musical development pathways possible. The DSO works with a broad sector of youth-focused partners beyond music, including the Neutral Zone, Downtown Boxing Gym, the Robotics Team at Detroit Cristo Rey High School, and many others.

Then there are partners in “invisible communities” like those that the **Seattle Symphony** is serving such as the incarcerated and the unhoused, many of whom are young people. [Lorin Green](#), Community Relations Manager in Seattle and a member of the



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League's Student Leadership Council, describes partnership work as listening first. "We're humans, so sometimes it starts with the basic connection of who I am and who they are, and who are their staff people. We want to hear what you want to do. We have limits of course—that's a challenge of being a large cultural organization. We have to be clear from the start about what we have to offer."

**Houston Youth Symphony** partners with the wind quintet WindSync specifically for its El Sistema-inspired Coda afterschool strings program. The partnership was presented in a [2024 League Conference session](#). HYS Debut String Orchestra Conductor and Coda Music Program Director Jackson Guillen arranges culturally relevant music, including new commissions, for Coda's beginning string players to perform alongside WindSync's professional winds. Coda students and families get to experience exciting, full orchestral sound, deepening their enthusiasm for music learning.

The ensembles of Title I schools in and around Palm Beach, FL, get prime performance real estate when the **Palm Beach Symphony** presents them in its lobby before every orchestra concert. The ensembles perform on a spectacular landing in the multi-level lobby, with good sound system support, and get professional photographs taken. "Then the students and families as well as their music directors are guests at our concert," explains Bryce Seliger, Education and Programming Associate. "It helps encourage family support for lessons."

The **South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's** Music Composition Academy, described in [Chapter 2](#), grows out of its Lakota Music Project, a partnership project of over 20 years. At the core are tribal elders, educators, and especially musicians. SDSO musicians, the Creekside Singers, and the Dakota cedar flutist [Bryan Akipa](#) listen to each other play, jam together, and then perform side by side, as well as together in commissioned works. Says [Jennifer Teisinger](#), "the trust building necessary for these programs to be impactful takes time, diligence, and consistency. When utilizing music as a cultural bridge builder, start first with the relationships. Build trust with the people you want to make music with. Why would they want to make music with you? Then, the music making comes out of the relationship."

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The work of inclusion requires that we descend from our pedestals and go into the communities that we say we want to impact and teach youngsters the music that we play and thereby give them an appreciation for our art. This is not achieved by simply bringing youngsters from an underserved community into our concert halls and playing a concert for them that they neither understand nor appreciate. Rather, it is achieved by starting a violin class in the social hall of the local church in the community where these kids live, and by putting violins in their hands and teaching them how to play. If we really want someone Black in our orchestra or on our board in the future, we need to go into the communities where Black people live and get some Black kids engaged in what we do. Maybe twenty years from now, one of those youngsters will serve as our Board Chair, and maybe then we can say with authenticity that the Symphony has a genuine relationship with the Black community. Otherwise, we're wasting our time and congratulating ourselves for what is really thoroughly ineffective EDI work.

*[Charles Dickerson](#), Founder, Executive Director, and Conductor, Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles*

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## Chapter 6: Evaluating Impact

**YOSA (Youth Orchestras of San Antonio)** uses several quantitative measures to evaluate impact, such as SAT scores, college admissions, and scholarships, that are useful for reporting to parents and for fundraising. Attendance metrics are useful gauges of student experience.

When it comes to youth engagement as a form of inclusion, however, signs of success are often subjective. For qualitative evidence, students complete year-end surveys, but [Sara Vicinaiz](#) of YOSA cautions that “the majority of our musicians report general positive experiences in our orchestras.” That is where their student-led Musician Council comes in, giving more nuanced responses to help point toward areas needing improvement.

[Gary Padmore](#) at the **New York Philharmonic** agrees: “the indicator is their understanding of their place in the orchestral world—an inclusive place, where all are welcome,” rather than, for instance, solely knowing more about music.

At **Talent Unlimited High School** in New York City, director [Megan Delatour](#) uses surveys as part of instruction. Her students see many performances by major performing ensembles. Delatour asks

them to evaluate these ensembles based on the standard they themselves are held to as “an inclusive ensemble, empowering diverse individuals to collaborate, explore, and take responsibility for authentic bold choices.” Students respond to a detailed survey about their entire experience in the performance venue as well as the performance itself. “It’s a chance for them to get to the core reason of why (or why not) they enjoyed certain performances,” she says. And it provides tangible evidence of student growth and what adjustments to make in instruction.

[Alison Levinson](#) at the **Pacific Symphony** particularly treasures the comment written by one student reflecting on their experience in arts-X-press: “For the first time in a long time, I can look in the mirror and feel like I’m worthy.” Similarly, a student in **South Dakota Symphony Orchestra’s** Music Composition Academy said of his first composition, a wind quintet titled *Mine*, “this is the first time I’ve made something that’s all *mine*.” Youth, teens especially, can find important personal growth through well-designed creative musical projects and simply through having their ideas and experiences taken seriously by adults.

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Success is if they’re engaged, if there’s some sort of spark, feeling seen, surprised that an adult or other person I care about sees me. Also, the spark of seeing something that inspires you, opens your world in a new way, gives you a new sense of purpose. That changes the way students think about the work they do in school.

*[Laura Reynolds](#), VP of Impact and Innovation, San Diego Symphony*



Youth Ambassadors are responsible for operational communications at El Sistema USA. Photo courtesy of El Sistema USA.



## Chapter 7: Communicating with Gen Z

Engaging with Gen Z requires new modes of communication and new ways of thinking about building relationships. “If you’re really thinking about messaging being meaningful to people, as opposed to selling something, then users’ online time and attention and level of engagement is the new KPI [key performance indicator],” says [Peter Rodgers](#), Director of Marketing at the **Madison Symphony Orchestra**. “Storytelling is the key aspect,” he continues, citing the success he has had with short videos, such as those where staff members talk about what’s on their Spotify playlist. [One especially light-hearted video went viral](#), with over 200,000 views. “Engagements were not just local but all over the country. We saw comments that this was fun to see from a symphony orchestra.”

“As with EDI and community outreach, if you don’t go where they are you can’t expect them to come to you,” Rodgers explains. With Gen Z that means social media, and in particular Instagram and TikTok. “If we don’t expand our media mix to the kinds of places where people are, it doesn’t matter what our product is.” On the content side, the Madison Symphony Orchestra is fortunate to have a digital marketing team that includes a member of Gen Z, [Chris Fiol](#), as Digital Marketing and Engagement Strategist. Adding this position was a long-term project for Rodgers. The position began part-time but, by virtue of results, has now gone full-time. “You overcome resistance with transparency and careful, frequent communication. You only need a few champions who understand and can support these initiatives.”

To learn more about Gen Z’s preferences in terms of programming, concert formats and the overall experience of attending an orchestra performance, watch the League webinar [Adapting to Changing Audience Preferences](#), featuring research findings produced by WolfBrown, in partnership with the League. For an in-depth focus on the preferences of audiences of color, including younger audiences, review the League Insights and webinar exploring findings from the Slover Linett report [Taking Another Listen](#).

As [Dan Trahey](#) at **El Sistema USA** says, young people “speak the language of the neighborhood. The energy is different with youth-led messaging.” In the Youth Ambassador Program described in Chapter 4, young people are responsible for operational communications. “Sometimes I’m biting my tongue—they’re learning how to send an email. But kids don’t respond to adult emails, only to other kids.”





“What we’re learning in arts-X-press, those values can apply to the whole symphony.”

Here, a group of students and staff at the Pacific Symphony give a “standing O”(vation) to their fellow students. Photo by Adam Kirchoff.



## Chapter 8: Integrating Youth Engagement

For decades, orchestras’ education, learning, and community engagement (EdCE) staff members have engaged with diverse communities of schools and families, often enabling orchestras to report demographics not seen in their typical concert audiences. As orchestras have come to prioritize EDI, and to recognize the centrality of youth engagement to this work, EdCE staff have been spotlighted. “When EDI kicks in, then Education gets more internal calls, because it’s the foundation of our work,” observes [Lorin Green](#) of the **Seattle Symphony** and the League Student Leadership Council.

But, as this Catalyst Guide demonstrates, youth engagement must be an institution-wide priority. It is essential to audience experience, audience development, equitable community engagement,

talent recruitment, and strategic planning, as well as learning. It needs to be resourced and integrated. As [Alison Levinson](#) at the **Pacific Symphony** puts it, “what we’re learning in arts-X-press, those values can apply to the whole symphony.”

“The rest of the organization can learn so much from Learning staff in ways to engage audiences, build curiosity, and retain patrons,” says [Suzanne Perrino](#) of the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra**. For instance, the orchestra can tap EdCE staff’s expertise to provide entry points for audiences through just a few minutes of engaging and inspiring insights, be they historical, artistic, or emotional. Why not entrust this to young musicians who are passionate about the works being performed?

Read about 12 actions to strengthen and align EDI practices in **Promising Practices: Actions Orchestras Can Take to Make Progress Toward Equity.**



# Integrating Youth Engagement (continued)

## Connecting Internal Resources

The relationship between EdCE staff and other orchestra functions is most impactful when it is reciprocal. While functions ranging from strategic planning to social media have much to learn from EdCE staff, EdCE programs urgently need cooperation, support, and passion from their marketing and PR colleagues. When collaboration is supported, the results can be magical. There is opportunity for leadership to assess the true needs and contributions of all staff and to support them working in an integrated way on the overall mission to serve the community through music.

Tensions between tradition and innovation and between immediate and longer-term goals can complicate this relationship, however. For instance, many EdCE programs struggle to get word out about opportunities for youth. That's a marketing function, but marketing staff typically work overtime just to meet their sales goals.

Similarly, social media and public relations can also be a challenge for EdCE staff, with the orchestra

wanting to maintain a singular voice and image. As the **Pacific Symphony** works on a brand refresh, [Alison Levinson](#) is thinking about how to recruit more students to arts-X-press. "The program needs to relate back to the Symphony, but also be youthful and appeal to an age demographic. How do you hold both?"

[Karisa Antonio](#) at the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** agrees. In terms of image, "learning and engagement could be our own organization." But the DSO has made strides presenting a unified identity. "We're committed to being an organization where music is for everyone. Through Detroit Strategy, we're expanding what it means to be an orchestra that is for and with its city. I know that a truly excellent musical experience centers the human experience. Everyone has a role to play, whether we're in Orchestra Hall or out in Detroit neighborhoods. It's different from what orchestras are used to, and it is better than we ever could have imagined."

Alumni of the Pacific Symphony's arts-X-press camp return to give back by training new camp counselors. Here, a group of summer camp counselors welcome new students to the program. Photo by Adam Kirchoff.







The El Sistema USA Youth Ambassador Program coaches youth leaders to take on progressively greater responsibilities within the organization, such as running workshops for younger children. Photo courtesy of El Sistema USA.



## Conclusion: The Future Matters

The rewards of authentic youth engagement in renewing orchestra culture and recruiting new generations of musicians, teaching artists, leaders, audiences, and donors are very clear. The recent history of efforts toward greater equity, diversity, and inclusion shows that change is possible and healthy. Engaging with increasingly diverse and increasingly aware youth will help any orchestra achieve its mission to serve its whole community. We need young people. And we have so much to

offer to youth in the richness of orchestral music and in opportunities for enjoyment, creativity, and careers. It is a two-way street.

Fortunately, many orchestras, including those seen in this guide, are already showing us ways to engage with and lift up youth. Now is the time to align the entire organization toward the future, to welcome new generations, to rediscover why we matter.



## Footnotes/Links

1. How Does the Racial Makeup of Gen Z Compare to Previous Generations?  
<https://posts.voroniapp.com/demographics/How-does-the-Racial-Makeup-of-Gen-Z-Compare-to-Previous-Generations-1384>
  2. LGBTQ+ Identification in U.S. Now at 7.6%  
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/611864/lgbtq-identification.aspx>
  3. Building a Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Culture for Gen Z  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2023/09/05/building-a-diverse-equitable-and-inclusive-culture-for-gen-z/>
  4. What is a Teaching Artist?  
<https://teachingartists.com/what-is-a-teaching-artist/>
  5. Creative Youth Development National Partnership  
<https://www.creativeyouthdevelopment.org>
  6. Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory  
<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>
  7. Trauma-Informed Practices  
<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/trauma-informed-practices>
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## About the Authors

**Theodore Wiprud** is a composer and a consultant in arts and education, and was the longtime Vice President, Education at the New York Philharmonic. He has been active in multiple EDI initiatives, including the launch of The Catalyst Fund in 2019.

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**Dr. Karen Yair** serves as the Vice President of Research and Resources at the League of American Orchestras. Under her leadership, the League has become the go-to location for orchestra data and insights, with an emphasis on EDI topics including demographic representation, inclusion and belonging, and audition and tenure practices. Karen developed the Catalyst Guide series to share learnings from orchestras advancing in EDI efforts to provide the orchestra field with the actionable, evidence-based intelligence needed to drive meaningful change.

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**Megan Delatour** began playing the viola at the age of eight. As a violist, she has had the opportunity to study with musicians such as Barry Lehr, Jennifer Arnold, Shelly Tramposh, Gregory Williams, Daniel Philips, Kerry Ryan, and Brett Deubner. Ms. Delatour's experience includes teaching with InterSchool Orchestras of America and the Harmony Program. As part of Interschool Orchestra's summer administrative staff, Ms. Delatour created scholarships to increase students' access to quality music education by auditioning for 15 slots on viola and cello for students of El Sistema programs to participate in ISO on a full ride. She maintains a private viola studio and has sent several students to participate in All State as well as students who pursued summer study at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Ms. Delatour holds a bachelor's in music education from Queens College and M.M in Music Education with her focus being Culturally Responsive Pedagogy from Boston University. In partnership with Dr. Susan Davis, she will be presenting on culturally responsive concert programming and youth engagement as a part of the NYSSMA Winter Conference 2024. Ms. Delatour is currently the orchestra director of Talent Unlimited High School, Summer Arts Institute, and serves as Artistic Director of Interschool Orchestras of New York.

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**Suzanne Perrino** is Senior Vice President of Learning and Engagement at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. She is a strong advocate for access to high quality music learning opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities. Under her leadership, the PSO became a nationally recognized leader in orchestra education programming, cited as such in publications, presentations, and national forums. Under her leadership, the PSO has launched several 'firsts' in the industry, including the first fully inclusive Sensory Friendly Program, Music and Wellness, Early Childhood Initiative and Symposium, Entry Points Program, Community Side-By-Side, and the Audience of the Future. During the pandemic shutdown in 2020, she produced virtual educational programs including "Make Time for Music with Fiddlesticks" for preschool audiences, Practice! Practice! Practice! for middle and high school instrumental students, "Won't You Be My Neighbor" digital orchestra video for 143 Kindness Day, virtual "Lift Every Voice" Concert, a "Musical Storytelling" week in collaboration with the Allegheny County Library Association, and an in-patient room six-concert video series for UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. The Digital Schooltime Concert series continues to be offered online free for educators across the globe with multi-language offerings coming soon. Ms. Perrino has held local, state, and national board positions and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music Performance (Oboe) and Certificate in Music Education (PA, K-12) from Carnegie Mellon University as well as a Master of Arts in Arts Management from American University.

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