

Afa S. Dworkin

President and Artistic Director, Sphinx Organization



Afa Sadykhly Dworkin is a music industry thought leader and cross-sector strategist driving national programming that fosters excellence and innovation in classical music.

Since 2015, she has served as President and Artistic Director of the Sphinx Organization, the nation's leading organization transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts. She has been named one of *Musical America's* "Top 30 Influencers", has received The Kennedy Center's Human Spirit Award, Chamber Music America's Arts Advocate of the Year Award, and is a member of the Recording Academy®. She serves as a Trustee to the League of American Orchestras, CultureSource Detroit, VisionIntoArt, New Canon, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Global Music Society, and other non-profits. The strength of Afa's leadership across sectors and national divides is informed by her musical training as a violinist, more than 30 years of experience in the classical music

field, and her international corporate experience as a trilingual interpreter and Executive Assistant to the President of ARCO, The International Oil and Gas Company in Baku, Azerbaijan. Her writing has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Strings Magazine*, and more.

In her Sphinx role, Afa oversees all strategic, fundraising, and artistic initiatives through which the organization expands access to classical music education and supports a national roster of distinguished musicians. Sphinx's programs touch the lives of 100 million people through live and digital reach. As the Sphinx Organization's first employee and formerly its Executive and Artistic Director, Afa has been responsible for creating and developing Sphinx's programming since its inception. Under her leadership, Sphinx's partner network has expanded to more than 300 organizations across the globe.

In addition to her work at Sphinx, Afa has helped to shape the national classical music landscape as a multi-year orchestra grant review panelist for the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, 3Arts Awards, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and the MetLife Awards administered by The League of American Orchestras. Beyond the orchestral community, she has aided grant review for the Surdna Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Charlotte Arts and Sciences Council, Independent Sector's American Express NGen Awards, and numerous state councils nationwide.

Afa has delivered ongoing thought leadership through an extensive roster of speaking engagements, including those at the International Arts & Ideas Festival, Independent Sector, Classical NEXT, Grantmakers in the Arts, Young Audiences Norway, Esmeraldas Festival in Ecuador, Chamber Music America, National Association for Schools of Music, League of American Orchestras, ICSOM, and Association of Canadian Orchestras. Former faculty at Roosevelt University's Master's in Arts Administration program and Clarkston Conservatory in Michigan, Afa currently teaches at the Cleveland Institute of Music and University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre & Dance and has

lectured at The Juilliard School, Bowling Green State University, Indiana University, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, Penn State, the University of Northern Texas, and Central Michigan University, among many others.

With parents of Azerbaijani, Persian, Muslim, and Jewish heritage raised in Baku, Azerbaijan, Afa has been dedicated to issues surrounding cultural identity since her youth and has been a life-long champion for transforming marginalized communities through the power of the arts. Afa's music training began at the prestigious Azerbaijan National Conservatory, where she honed her craft under the tutelage of the region's leading artists and pedagogies. She subsequently joined the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra as an entering freshman at the University of Michigan School of Music while earning her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Violin Performance with High Honors. Her performing career has taken her to Russia, Switzerland, Austria, and throughout the United States. A multilingual individual, she is passionate about her family, culinary arts, and travel.

(Photo credit: Shawn Lee)