Follow the Music for Systemic Change

Conference 2025

VANESSA ROSE: So we're going to start with a quote from the great Nina Simone. “I had spent many years pursuing excellence, because this is what classical music is all about. Now, it was dedicated to freedom, and that was far more important.” So we are individuals who have worked in and with orchestras as musicians, board members, staff members, consultants. We come together with a shared dedication to connecting arts, especially music, to the social, political, and cultural context of our time. We also share involvement with the American Composers Forum, and are dedicated to animating this connection through living composers and the music of our time.

When we proposed this panel a year ago, we had just been together at the Equal Justice Initiative’s Legacy Sites in Montgomery, Alabama, along with other people from western classical music in the US. And the idea for the session came from the conversations we were having on site about how to apply this incredibly heavy experience to our work. Namely, addressing the complexity of this country's history when there's such strong effort to preserve only one perspective. We contend that allowing for a fuller picture of the realities and the impact of those truths is what makes the musical experiences vital and relevant to different communities, ages, backgrounds, cultures, etcetera, and it makes our case for why this matters to our elected officials and community leaders.

In short, the music created, performed, and heard by living people is not disconnected from all of these human experiences and is, therefore, not neutral. These subjective qualities can and should be part of our approach as artists, managers, presenters, listeners, and supporters. So now, of course, the discussion is even more timely than when we proposed this a year ago. We were witnessing disruption to conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion, and ultimately, these opportunities to address long oppressed and marginalized experiences and truths.

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So I thank you for being here with us. Thank you for your vulnerability and courage in the conversations that will be preceding this. And we're going to frame the conversation today with some examples and guiding conversations before we move into that interactive portion in the second half, and we welcome continued conversation of that, of course. So I'm going to pose a few questions that I'll be posing again when we do our breakouts, so you can think about that as you're listening to my colleagues here. And before I do that, I want you to take a moment and think about who makes up your community, what defines community for you, particularly with your orchestra hat on, because we're going to be asking a lot of questions around that.

So here are the questions, and we'll be putting this up, and again, we'll be coming back to this, but just so you have it in your mind as you're thinking about this during this first part. What is your orchestra's programming, presentation, and audience engagement saying about your institution's unique position in your community? What is the narrative that the public understands about your orchestra? How do you know? What might be barriers to alignment between what you offer and what is perceived by your larger community? And how can that be shaped into a form of advocacy for the orchestra and the music directed to elected officials, supporters, etcetera?

So hopefully, what you'll hear today will be a multiplicity of ideas that can help through this process in your own orchestra, and I want to acknowledge that we might not present as a group representative of a variety of perspectives, particularly in respect to race and gender, but I encourage you to suspend that assumption and discover that we actually will offer a vast constellation of experiences and perspectives based on our own learned and lived experiences. And we've all led a few lives at this point, I think.

So my fellow panelists, I'm going to invite you to introduce yourselves, and I'm going to be asking a specific question that we've obviously already planned for each of you based on your perspective. I'm going to start in this order with Lee Bynum. So we're going to ground this conversation to help those of us making decisions about programming, marketing, audience experiences, to better understand how the absence of this context that we're talking about in the way that we create, share, and hear music connects to some of these systemic issues.

LEE BYNUM: Good morning, everyone. Can you all hear me? Fantastic. My name is Lee Bynum. My pronouns are they/them. I am the Interim Artistic Director of the Dream Unfinished, which is a 10 year old art activist orchestra in New York City. And I'm also the permanent Executive Director of Maestro Music, which does advocacy for women and non binary musicians, composers, and conductors in the theater. Thank you for having me today. I'd like to first start with the understanding that every act of programming is an act of storytelling, and every story has a context, whether or not we choose to acknowledge it.

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When orchestras present music as timeless or universal without interrogating whose time or whose universality to which they are referring, they're making a specific and often exclusionary and political choice. Definitionally, this is not neutrality, this is erasure. In my work across the field, at Lincoln Center, Minnesota Opera, and the Mellon Foundation, I've seen how this avoidance of context can manifest as structural inertia. We have the same repertoire cycle, the same creative teams, the same

donors shaping the same taste at the same organizations, season after season. And what that produces has narrowed the artistic and civic imagination. It reinforces a canon rooted in Western European hierarchies, while rendering invisible the musical landscapes, the lived experiences, and the cultural identities that exist right outside the concert hall doors.

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At its worst, this context erasure contributes to what I think of as fragile exceptionalism of orchestra culture. The idea that we are too refined to be messy, that we are too sacred to be interrogated, that we are too institutional to be vulnerable. But the truth is, we orchestras should be in conversation with our communities constantly. They should be porous relationships, right? Moving in both directions. Context helps us understand how a piece of music becomes a vessel for memory, identity, resistance, or healing. So when ACF works with orchestras to commission new works or embed composers in residency models, we don't just ask, "What do you want to hear?" We also ask, "With whom do you want to be in relationship? What stories remain untold in your communities? How can music help you listen differently to the world around you?"

Context is not the enemy of excellence, it is the co-architect. When we avoid context, we don't protect the music, we diminish it. But when we embrace context, we expand our capacity to be relevant, to be resonant, and to be rooted. That's not just a strategy for a systemic change, it's a path to institutional survival. Thank you.

VANESSA: Thank you, Lee. Next we're going to hear from Antonio Cuyler, and I'm going to ask you, Antonio, we want to bring forward that what we're talking about is not a theme, a concert program, or initiative, we're talking about systemic change. This is rooted in how orchestras exist in their communities. So I invite you to think — to help us think about some ways our audience today can really consider this and apply this mindset change.

[0:07:53.3]

ANTONIO CUYLER: Good morning, everyone. Can you hear me? Excellent. I'm Antonio C. Cuyler. For 10 years, I taught cultural policy at Florida State University, and so I'm also a researcher of arts entrepreneurship, arts leadership, and so that is the frame that I'm bringing to my answer in response to Vanessa's question. And as I was preparing for this session, there was this question that kept coming up for me that was like a leitmotif from a Wagnerian opera, actually. And that question is, is classical music a public good? Is it a civic right? Is it a human right? And if so, what are some of the systemic, structural, operational ways in which orchestras unwittingly get in their way of making classical music a public good, a human right, and civic right?

And there were five things that came up for me. So first, in the infamous report, “Americanizing the American Orchestra,” you all remember that? Chapter one says, “Music comes first.” Why isn't it people come first? Since it is people who create the music, who perform the music, who govern the music, who administrate the music, who lead the music. You see where I'm headed? Why not people first, and music as the intervention to bring people together?

Number two, connected to that is this enduring belief that humans can only achieve artistic excellence through abuses and misuses of power that enable unnecessary harm in human suffering. Relative to that, and actually, you know, in conversation with Lee, I've been thinking about how we have internalized inferiority as orchestral field, undermining the power and the true power of orchestral music. Why? And I get the myth and the misunderstanding that, you know, artists should suffer, this idea that the starving artist is very weird, right? Where did we get that?

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Number three, how many of you have read the IRS’s Tax Exempt Purposes? Okay, there's a minority here. So I just want us to take a look really quickly. Again, I remind you I taught cultural policy. So I wanted you all to see this, because this is codified law that may be antithetical to some of the executive orders, but this is the law. The exempt purposes set forth in Section 501(c)(3) are charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition. If you could believe it, the NFL was a nonprofit. And preventing cruelty to children or animals.

The term charitable is used in its generally accepted legal sense, and includes relief of the poor, the distress, or the underprivileged, advancement of religion, advancement of education or science, erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments or works, lessening the burdens of government, lessening neighborhood tensions, eliminating prejudice and discrimination, defending human and civil rights secured by law, and combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency. Where do orchestras fit? Artistic excellence is not one of the reasons the IRS gives us tax exempt status.

And maybe that's a good thing, right? Because we are experts at artistic excellence. And so, you know, eliminating prejudice and discrimination, social bridging and bonding and cohesion, being the connective tissue of communities. What would happen if we were to become experts at that through artistic excellence as my colleague said. Related to this, number four is undervaluing tax exemption and tax deductions, okay? So if you think about it, the public, the community, has granted orchestras tax exemption, we've already determined that, right? Does anyone know the value of tax exemption to orchestras?

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Why don't we know that? That's money that is saving us a lot, right? In 2008, Fell [?] determined that the entire creative sector benefited to the tune of $2.1 billion from tax exemption. That's everything, museums, opera companies, right? So 2008 has been a long time. So we need to know, how much do orchestra save from tax exemption? But the public has given us that, right? Then the public has said that we will give tax deductions to corporations, foundations, individuals, right? So that's another pot of funding.

And then when it comes to direct funding for orchestras, you can get city, sometimes county, state, regional, and federal funding until recently. We've asked the public for a lot, and then we ask them to pay $250 for the best ticket at the orchestra after they've already given us all of these things, directly and indirectly. Why? And then sometimes we tack on another hidden fee. I consume arts all the time. In fact, I'm leaving tomorrow to go see an opera in Saint Louis. And so I'm paying attention to how people are experiencing purchasing tickets, and the hidden fees doesn't do a lot to build public trust. And I am one of you. Like, I am a person who studied classical music, and I believe in the power of classical music. So we have to think about that.

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But the last thing I want to say related to this is subverting and undermining distributional equity, right? In some of our communities, we've been grappling with this issue of racial equity and how to materialize it, and funding for arts and culture. In doing so, there have been, like, some horrible battles. In one particular community, the symphony joined with the opera and the ballet to hire a lobbyist to undermine cultural organizations for people with disabilities, of color, LGBTQ, and advocating for cultural equity for all of us. Now that the entire system, the philanthropic system, is under attack, right?

Because, if you think about it, there are some folks advocating for taxing your ticket sales, because it is actually a for profit activity, right? If you think about it, the entire system is under attack. And those same people that you undermine, that you advocated against, you need their resistance and moral capital now. And so how are we going to mend fences to bring everyone back into the fold? And with that, I yield my time. Thank you.

VANESSA: Oh, my goodness, we've only heard from two of the four people. This is incredible. So for your convenience, that IRS link is in the app. If you open the session, you'll find that link right there.

Thank you, Antonio. Okay, moving to Ari Solotoff. So Ari, acknowledging this moment we're in, and obviously the ongoing concern and more so now, about 501(c)(3), nonprofits, suggesting a political position. What are some helpful ways that orchestras can reframe that? What are the actual legal considerations? What are some misconceptions about what that 501(c)(3) status is legally able as a nonprofit? What we're legally able to say, present or provoke?

[0:15:45.4]

ARI SOLOTOFF: Well, thank you, Vanessa, and it's great to be here this morning to share this conversation with you and my colleagues on the panel. My name is Ari Solotoff. I'm a shareholder and an entertainment lawyer at Drummond Woodson in Portland, Maine. I chair the entertainment and sports law forums division on theater and performing arts within the American Bar Association. I'm am orchestra manager by training and practice. So I've shared this room with many of you in operation and activity. And over the last six years, I've had the great benefit of teaching, and I do a fair amount of teaching, a course called Legal Issues in the Arts, including with my colleague here, Antonio Cuyler, at the University of Michigan, and also at Indiana University.

And so my context for this part of the conversation is really driven by each of those lenses and perspectives, and my accumulated experience of having been on sort of all sides of the aisle, if you will, in thinking about these questions with you and the questions that Vanessa has posed. But more germane to this, I started to think about, why am I on this panel? And it's not simply to help give some context from a legal perspective, although I'm not giving legal advice here, and I'm by no means a tax lawyer or a labor and employment lawyer. But I do think it is sort of that accumulated experience that has allowed me to kind of pick out some of the themes that have emerged in my own practice, having moved from the world of orchestra management into the world of law practice.

And in fact, the question that I get most often from future attorneys and even from future orchestra managers, is, why did you move from orchestra management into law practice? And I think some of the answer to that question is actually really embedded in what I wanted to share with you in my brief remarks this morning, and it comes from the themes that I really see that have emerged in working with students, in teaching. What I have learned from them in sharing legal issues in the arts is that they begin to discover the incredible nuance that exists in the law and the importance of precision in our thinking, in our writing, and the rigor of attention that we give to this work.

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And so the students start out this semester with sort of very broad, almost monolithic concepts of the law, and they end up walking away from the semester, really, with a great degree of sensitivity to

the nuance of all of these different elements that exists within our language, within what we present, and how that shows up for them in their performance and in their practice. By way of example, to answer Antonio's question about where do orchestras fit in the tax code, there actually is mention of a symphony orchestra in the tax code, and you have to dig a little bit for it. And so you actually have to go to the regulations, not just the statute. And actually, if we can pull up to that, the broad definition, just the one that you had earlier, if you zoom in on the word educational, right? We see it's religious, educational, scientific.

So we're going to double click on educational. An organization may be exempt as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) if it is organized and operated exclusively for one or more of the following purposes. Well, what about educational? What does educational mean? Well, the word educational as defined in the code, or at least in the regs, says the term educational as used in Section 501(c)(3) relates to the instruction or training of the individual for the purpose of improving or developing his or her capabilities, or the instruction of the public on subjects useful to the individual and beneficial to the community. An organization.

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Oh, you're good. You're we could leave it actually on the — if you go back to the broad line. So all we're looking at is this word educational. How do we know what it means? This is what we're sort of examining in our work. An organizational — an organization may be educational even though it advocates a particular position or viewpoint. And I want you to hold on to that word viewpoint for a moment. So long as it presents a sufficiently full and fair exposition of the pertinent facts as to permit an individual or the public to form an independent opinion or conclusion.

On the other hand, an organization is not educational if its principal function is the mere presentation of unsupported opinion. The following are examples of organizations which, if they otherwise meet the requirements of the section, are indeed educational. Example number four. Museums, zoos, planetariums, symphony orchestras, and other similar organizations. And so we get to this point in my class and teaching, and I asked the students, “What does it mean to you that symphony orchestras, by example, fall within the educational prong of what it means to be tax exempt?” And then we'll just sort of leave it at that question, but it really frames, I think, a lot of what we're talking about this morning.

So I talk a bit more in our class about what we call the three C’s. In sort of traditional terms, we define them as credit, compensation, and creative control. And so any conversation that's happening in this space is really centered around those particular aspects. The three C’s, credit, compensation, and creative control tends to show up in almost any kind of an entertainment transaction. But I think what we're hearing this morning is that there is another three Cs. Context, conversation, and community.

And so that those three C's, in combination with this conversation, are very much part of what this is all about.

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So I think just to frame this a bit further, and then I'll yield my time, and I did come with cases. How could a lawyer not come with case law? But we don't have time. But I was prepared to talk about the recent NEA case. And of course, NEA v. Finley, which was the case back in the early '90s. And I think we're seeing that play out again. But to talk about a frame for how symphony orchestras might navigate what it means to be courageous leaders in this time of navigating change, and I want to situate further this frame within the League's really excellent resource. If you haven't visited it yet, it's called Resources for Navigating the Changing Landscape. It's actually on the League's website.

It's a really wonderful exposition of, I think, the kind of pillars of what's happening right now. There are four pillars, or four areas within the website. Overview of federal actions and executive orders, the legal analysis of anti-discrimination laws and the scope of diversity, equity, and Inclusion activities, messaging guides for ongoing action and work in this space. And then the fourth prong is creative expression resources. And so my frame, if you will, is really within this fourth prong. What does it mean to have creative expression within a symphony orchestra?

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Very briefly, I think it's important to understand a little bit about the history and nature of free speech. There's different types of protected speech in our country. There's political speech, there's religious speech, there's academic speech. And then I think there's a fourth category, what we might call art speech. And I think this is what Lee was referring to. This notion of art speech, which is really using the creative process to reflect on our world and to communicate in non cognitive ways, through image, color, form, symbol, essentially the elements of music notation and sound, right? This is not words, but non cognitive meaning, such that these visceral elements then touch on what it means to be human in a communicative way that we process differently than just reading.

Said another way, one commentator has described that creative expression through art is a way of — we sense that the artist's intuition and interpretation of life, power, reality, or death. This is what we're engaged in. And so we also acknowledge and understand that art can be subversive. It can be threatening to social order and to social norms. Think, if you will, just about Shostakovich and Soviet Russia, right? Art can convey a message, it can convey a viewpoint, and it can do so on a particular content that touches on societal norms and values. And so as a result, there's been efforts and there's an understanding that there are limitations on free speech.

There's two types of limitations. There's time, place, and manner limitations, which are really content neutral limitations, and there's content based limitations. Content based limitations are those that have to do with speech that might incite violence or involve a threat or defamatory speech or fighting words. And then the last category, which is the category of obscenity, and obscenity is the one that we see show up most frequently, I think, in the arts and also in Hollywood, right?

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So the another category of speech that exists is commercial speech, right? The speech for commercial transaction. And I think what we then see is the combination of the two. Artistic and commercial speech is what we think of as Hollywood or the commercial music industry or Broadway. Kind of the coming together of these two forms of speech to create both an artistic message and also commercial output. So the frame I would love to offer you as we go into conversation, as I started to think about what might be the matrix of thought, and how do we put these pieces together based on this accumulated experience? And if we might imagine sort of a matrix, if you will.

On one end of the spectrum, you've got content neutral material, right? It has sort of no message behind it. Sort of imagine what that might be. And on the other end of that spectrum would be content based material. There is a message, a viewpoint, a sense of perspective brought to the programming or the speech. And then I want to introduce sort of another category, and this really comes to me, and I'll wrap up in a moment, just in my own experience of working in the entertainment space, this opportunity to kind of see and interact with many different authors and artists. And I came across one over the last year, his name is Viet Thanh Nguyen. He is the author of a book called The Sympathizers, and he's a Pulitzer Prize winning author. And he introduced, I think, the concept that I would love to introduce here, which is this idea of narrative plenitude and narrative scarcity.

And so if we have imagined sort of these four quadrants of content neutral, content based, narrative plenitude. and narrative scarcity, you can imagine where any given program or activity might fit within any one of those quadrants. The definition that Viet Thanh gives for narrative plenitude is the concept of a rich and diverse representation of stories and narratives, particularly for marginalized groups who have traditionally been underrepresented or stereotyped. It's about ensuring that diverse perspectives and experiences are heard and seen, breaking down the idea of narrative scarcity, where only limited, often biased stories are told. So with that frame and with that matrix, I think we can kind of evaluate, you know, community programming activities of orchestras and sort of fit where this sits with intention and precision and nuance in the conversations that we're having.

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VANESSA: Thank you so much, Ari. All right, last but not least, my colleague, Loki Karuna. Okay, so we've set up a real framework here, both in terms of what some root causes are, systemically, what the framework originally was for the creation of these nonprofit organizations, and today's structure. I was — there's so many, I can't — I'm so glad this is being recorded. I can't wait to listen to this again. But context, conversation, and community. I mean, we're really looking at so much more breath and also tension. And I'm very eager to hear your thoughts, Loki, what does this movement make possible artistically and long term for orchestras?

LOKI KARUNA: Thank you Vanessa, and thank you everyone for being here. My name is Loki. I'm a Bodhisattva, I'm a bassoonist, I'm the host and producer of a podcast and a suite of nationally syndicated radio programs, and I co-lead the American Composers Forum as the Executive Director with Vanessa. So today I just wanted to highlight and unpack four areas in which I think there are long term effects that can be explored for building proximity and relationship between orchestra and community.

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So number one, a more genuine and accurate understanding of societal ecosystems and their contexts, including conceptions of culture and race, and even how we define phrase classical music can inspire musicians and audiences to venture beyond typical programming practices, which can, in turn, transform how orchestras relate to their communities long term. So what does this more genuine and accurate understanding look like? So for example, typical programming practices among American orchestras perpetuate a eurocentricity that we tend to disassociate from broader white supremacy culture. We challenge white supremacy in housing, in education. We aren't talking about Christopher Columbus the way that we used to. But we don't challenge it in the same way in orchestral programming.

And this is something that we have to think about. And even within that, we also have to consider the degree to which we center works by historically marginalized composers that just so happen to fall within the European aesthetic. I think about this in the context of the story of Florence Price, who, for many years had to pass as Mexican so that she could move her career forward. Our tendency to normalize anti-Blackness through the work of Black people is something that also has to be interrogated. That's number one.

Number two. Honestly engaging the why behind an orchestra's existence can reveal where an organization and its members exist, relating to conversations that center identity, purpose, and community, and societal utilities. So for example, what is the relationship between an orchestra's

values and its bottom line? Is adventurous programming, quote, unquote, adventurous programming, engaged as an opportunity, or is it engaged as a financial risk? If programming living composers who don't have the profile of a Jesse Montgomery or a John Williams is seen as a risk, what does that say about your organization's core values and the why of your organization?

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Many orchestras have or are figuring out fellowships and residency programs. Is the goal to enrich your organization through these programs and, more broadly, enrich the field, or is the goal to help train musicians in the art of adhering to the norms we've been conditioned to see as correct, or just the way it is? Is your orchestra actually an American orchestra, or is it a megaphone for European history and culture? Is the name of your organization simply a marker of its geography, or can your programming shift to reflect the uniqueness of your community?

A positive example that comes to mind for me is what the South Dakota Symphony is doing through its Lakota Music Project. This isn't just highlighting Indigenous composers for the sake of doing it. There's a specificity in community and conversation and how this directly relates to what's going on in Sioux Falls and across the state of South Dakota. All of that's number two.

Number three. Creating space for composers and artists to engage authentically opens doors to new approaches of collaboration and potentially new audiences. However, this requires an awareness of the degree to which individuals from marginalized communities are expected to adhere to practices historically deemed as neutral or culturally unmarked. And I think this idea of neutrality or something being culturally unmarked can be plainly seen in entertainment. So for example, the show “Friends,” that I'm sure many of you are familiar with is something that's considered a show for everyone, something with broad appeal. But a show like “Living Single,” which has the exact same premise, is seen as a Black show. So we do the same thing in our field without realizing it as to the front.

So for example, my most genuine engagement and my most genuine perspectives are informed by historical contexts of race and culture that I don't think we can separate from the way that we operate in this field, and this is often marginalized due to the degree to which it challenges the norms that have been become intrinsic to the industry. This culture creates a reality in which human perspective is reduced to being deemed as a funding risk. I like to consider the American plantation. Black people were not only the help, but the entertainment in many cases. We've been foot stomping, hand clapping, fiddling for hundreds of years in this country.

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I believe that putting Black folks on stage for predominantly disproportionate white audiences is the contemporary evolution of this historical reality. Effort has to go into not only who is playing but who is being played for and what is being played. The tendency for this perspective to create discomfort should not and does not invalidate the perspective. It's simply a door to a deeper conversation that has positive results at the other end. And finally, number four. Deeper levels of accountability among musicians and staff can be a challenge, but it's necessary, a necessary means toward identifying members of an organization that are aligned with new and updated thinking.

So for example, orchestras that reserve artistic planning to individuals and groups whose education and experiences are limited to Eurocentric ways of thinking about classical music prevent themselves from experiencing their full growth potential and genuine ability to engage broader audiences. If your artistic committee made up of musicians is pushing back on a refocus on new music and engaging living composers, maybe these musicians are no longer aligned with your values as an organization. Being able to play an instrument very well should not be the only job qualification you consider when hiring and granting tenure.

All of these, all in all, these conversations, in my view, have positive, long term effects, but the journey to those positive, long term effects requires us to challenge every aspect of who we are and why we're here. It's why I'm in this work and no longer dedicating my career to bassoon like I once did. I'm evolving toward my goals for our industry, just as we all have to evolve for our respective goals for this industry. Thank you very much.

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All right, thank you everyone. We're beginning to wrap up here. I hear that the conversations are very lively, but we are going to wrap up. Thank you. Okay, so I'll briefly share two brief things that I pulled from my breakout session. The first, I want to give credit to Lauren from the Virginia Symphony, and also the Richmond Symphony. She shares that understanding the context of an audience member's distaste for new music is vital. Identifying that thing has proven to be a springboard for deeper engagement. So is it lack of understanding? Is it not really having been exposed to certain aesthetics? Identifying that thing is a springboard. And that, in itself, can create broader public support and a stronger case for public advocacy.

The second and final thing I wanted to share, I want to give credit to John McCann. Thank you very much. He posed the question, “What's the point?” Mission statements don't address the point. Most mission statements are a version of, our organization's mission is to offer world class performances for as many communities as possible. Why? Why is that your mission? What does that say? And then,

you know, the final thing that came up, you know, that I think is really useful, going back to the analogy of the plantation. Black cooks didn't make the plantation anti-racist any more than BIPOC musicians make an orchestra anti-racist.

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VANESSA: We've got three minutes. We're going to keep going. Ari, you want to go next?

ARI: I'm going to go real fast. I want to just acknowledge everybody at the table that I sat at who contributed wonderfully from their different perspectives the themes that I heard, using the orchestral platform to give voice to those in the community who can identify the sort of history, aspirations, identity of their community. The orchestra as a platform. I think that was a really wonderful way to think about it. We also talked about this idea of maybe, historically, we might have just done something, and now it's really a question of, how should we introduce or do something, and who is best positioned to do that within our community and within the work? And then how is it done on a smaller scale?

Not every orchestra has the ability to do this at scale, but that there's many meaningful ways within your community that you can do this and affect meaningful change. And I think there's a real balancing act between sort of weathering the storm, if you will, keeping, you know, the powder dry within this period of what feels like suppression on creative expression, and when to take risks, and why those risks are being taken, and how to be strategic about that within this period of time. And some of this is really about the framing, the kind of marketing and messaging that goes around this work, even as it's still happening. So a lot of really great discussion.

ANTONIO: So there are three things that I heard in the two tables. One, how to bring more musicians into the fold, right? Because the ways in which musicians are educated sometimes are antithetical to participating in community engagement and community learning. Does per service or salaried orchestras have to think about how to operationalize this differently, and what can we learn to move the practice along from looking at these two models differently? But then also the opportunities to, like, really embrace this idea that orchestras exist as a creative third place for their communities, where people are coming and intersecting with each other all across the community. But also, while you have them there, how are you using that opportunity to educate them about each other, right?

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LEE: Since we can't really solve anything unless we actually name it, I'm going to give five quick challenges for us to think about. First, the consistent bifurcation of community and education is people dealing with people from the main stage decision makers. Secondly, the challenges of regional expansiveness, specifically for state orchestras, that complicate simple understandings of community. Thirdly, a lack of transparency, even for people who work at orchestras, around the programming process instead of prioritizations. Fourth, guest curators as a means of addressing a lack of representation, versus the tension of not having an artistic staff that actually reflects the community for which they're programming. And then finally, venue as both a solution to problems and a cause for others. Thank you.

VANESSA: Thank you so much, everybody. We're at time. I just want to remind you that we are also part of your community. Our contact information is there. I'm sure we're pretty easy to find anyway. Composersforum.org is also in your app. And just want to remind you keep asking the question, why? Keep finding community to have these conversations and persist. Thank you so much.

[APPLAUSE]