

Discover the Power of Inclusion in Orchestra Culture

November 6, 2025

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar from the League of American Orchestras, which is entitled, Discover the Power of Inclusion in Orchestra Culture. My name's Karen Yair, and I'm Vice President for Research and Resources at the League. Really pleased to have you with us today.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: As we're getting started, please do go ahead and introduce yourselves in the chat, let us know your orchestra and where you're joining us from.

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00:01:14.390 --> 00:01:30.630

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: If you've got questions as we go along, please just put them in the Q&A box rather than the chat, and you'll also find closed captioning and live transcription through the Zoom toolbar. Everyone who registered will get an email transcript and a slide deck, as well as a recording of the webinar at the end.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Now, before we begin, I want to make a very quick, but important thank you to our funders. So, today's webinar draws on the Catalyst Guide, The Power of Inclusion, which was made possible by a generous grant from the Sakana Foundation.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: The webinar itself is supported by the Howard Gilman Foundation, and in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of the Office of the Governor and the State Legislator.

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00:01:55.330 --> 00:01:56.250

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So...

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00:01:59.950 --> 00:02:11.069

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We're here today because we all know that great performance... a great performance is backed up by a great team that works well together, people who feel connected and valued and part of something bigger than themselves.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So in orchestras, that sense of belonging and inclusion shapes everything that we create, how we welcome audiences, and how we respond together to challenges.

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00:02:20.460 --> 00:02:29.169

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: And at a time when there's so much urgent pressure competing for our attention, inclusion work can be difficult to champion, but this is when we need it most.

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00:02:29.770 --> 00:02:41.250

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: What we'll share today are some key research findings and stories that make it easier for us all to advocate for continued investment in people and workplace culture, even and especially when times are rough.

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00:02:42.030 --> 00:02:45.050

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So... Today's session...

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: is actually taking part in two parts. First, I'm going to share some highlights from our new Catalyst Guide, what we've learned from orchestras where inclusion and belonging are strongest. And then, I'm going to introduce our fantastic panel of colleagues, who are going to reflect on what these insights mean in practice for their orchestras.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So, the story behind the Catalyst Guide began a couple of years ago, actually, when nearly 100 member orchestras took part in an inclusion index, which was developed with Accordant advisors as part of our Inclusive Stages pilot.

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00:03:18.730 --> 00:03:32.280

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Now, if your orchestra participated, then you'll have received a detailed benchmarking report, that, rated your organization on different aspects of inclusion and belonging, as reported to you by your staff and musicians.

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00:03:32.670 --> 00:03:50.729

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Now, behind the scenes, we were also busy aggregating the results and analyzing them, and for the first time, we could see now, from quantitative evidence, that the orchestras rated the most inclusive were absolutely doing the right thing for their staff and musicians, but also, they're seeing tangible competitive advantage.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: And these are the three factors that, we identified from that statistical evidence.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: First, staff and musicians were more likely to stay in their jobs. Second, they're more likely to share fully their own ideas and to collaborate creatively, contributing to artistic excellence and to organisational innovation.

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00:04:10.550 --> 00:04:19.889

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: And third, they're more likely to feel the energy and purpose that gives them resilience through difficult times, supported by a strong emotional connection to their work.

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00:04:20.560 --> 00:04:30.949

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Conversely, the orchestras with the lower inclusion scores were seeing some real harm. People reported higher stress, diminished trust in leadership, and lower morale.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So, we can see from the quantitative evidence now that inclusion is a moral and social imperative, and it's a performance factor that directly affects creativity, stability, and wellbeing.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So...

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: After we'd done all that quantitative research, we started talking to some of the orchestras that showed the most... the highest rated inclusion

scores, and we began to see some clear patterns, ways of working that build trust, spark creativity, and strengthen the whole organization.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: For the purposes of today, I've grouped these into three main themes.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: The first is around a culture of trust and care, and we could see that the most inclusive orchestras, in those orchestras, people described a genuine sense of we, musicians, staff on board, moving together against one shared mission.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We could see how that spirit grew through small, everyday gestures, not just through policies and structures. It depended on psychological safety, and that's the feeling that you can speak honestly, offer ideas, and disagree with others without any risk or fear of retaliation.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We saw that leaders were setting that tone through openness and curiosity.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: And that trust was running through everything as the foundation for inclusion.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: The second set of characteristics that we identified was around collaboration, around structures that support this kind of work.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We could see collaboration across functions, and we could see that orchestras were breaking down silos, bringing musicians, staff, and trustees together to tackle shared challenges, building empathy in the process.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We could see that growth opportunities, professional development, were another hallmark of these orchestras. So the most inclusive orchestras were investing in mentoring, training, and flexible pathways for professional development.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We found that when people can see a future for themselves within an organization, they commit more deeply to its success. And all this was underpinned by accountability at all levels, so expectations were clear, and when problems arose, people told us that they were addressed with honesty and compassion.

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00:06:43.180 --> 00:06:48.210

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: The third set of characteristics was around sustaining this culture over time.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: And what we found was that the orchestras that were able to sustain inclusion over time communicated openly and often. They shared not only what decisions were made, but why those decisions were made, even when the news was difficult. And that kind of transparency built trust and reduced uncertainty for staff and musicians.

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00:07:09.530 --> 00:07:24.800

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: These orchestras also empowered people to share, to shape the future. So musicians and staff were invited to suggest projects or community partnerships, and those ideas were genuinely acted on. And that sense of agency really changes how people feel about their work.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Most importantly, we saw that these practices were consistent, so inclusion wasn't treated as a side project by these orchestras, it was woven through everything from strategy to programs to daily habits.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: With the idea that over time, that consistency becomes more than a habit, it becomes an identity, and who we are.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: And now, I am delighted to introduce our panel for today. If you'd all like to come onto screen, please.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: We have with us Kevin Brown, who's the Principal Bass Van Dusen Family Chair of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Maribeth Baker, who is the Human Resources Counselor from the Charlotte Symphony, Christina Littlejohn, who's Chief Executive Officer at the

Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, and our chair for the panel discussion, Pratichi Shah, who is Founder and president of Flourish Talent Management Solutions, and is also, I'm happy to say, a member of the League board.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Each of these colleagues, all the orchestras that they represent, appears in the Power of Inclusion Catalyst Guide, which we launched just a couple of weeks ago. And because of the compelling stories that they shared in the guide, we've invited them back to talk with you today, continue the conversation with one another, and with you.

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Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So, over to you, Pratichi. Thank you so much.

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Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Karen, thank you so much, and I just want to say thank you as well to the League for the important work that you all do every day, but I think especially this guide is going to be so useful, and I'll encourage everyone who's attending the webinar that if you haven't had the chance to check it out, please do. It reflects so much wisdom, so much work on behalf of the League.

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00:09:02.960 --> 00:09:24.370

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: so many great practices of all of our colleagues in our orchestras across the country. So we're excited for you to see that. We're gonna jump into this conversation, as indicated. Christina, Kevin, and Maribeth, thank you so much for being on this journey with us, and for joining us today. We're conscious of the fact that, as Karen mentioned.

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Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Inclusion requires commitment. It doesn't just happen. An inclusive culture has to be intentional. It has to be... there has to be accountability, as Karen just mentioned. So.

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00:09:37.470 --> 00:09:48.159

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: you know, there's a few other things going on for orchestras, in addition to building culture. And so I'm curious, as you all were on your journey.

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Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: And everything that was going on for you, and sometimes you were leveraging the things that happened to build that culture. What particularly stands out to you about the culture journey of each of your orchestras?

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Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, if we could start there and talk a little bit about that, that would be amazing. Kevin, can I start with you?

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00:10:11.200 --> 00:10:12.839

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Sure. Thanks.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: All right, well, thank you all for having me. It's nice to be here. I wasn't involved in writing the guide, but the Detroit Symphony was, and I'm happy to be here as a musician perspective.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: So a couple things that really stand out to me about the...

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: about the DSO, one thing that I will just kind of start with is that, as you all probably know, about 15 years ago, the DSO had a, a lockout, a strike that, lasted for about 6 months.

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00:10:44.550 --> 00:10:52.680

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And, that was obviously a very difficult thing, and it was obviously also a sign of...

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: a culture that was maybe not inclusive, and so, you know, I really... I want to be clear that I don't think that the strike was a good thing, because I'm going to talk about some takeaways.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: That, that the institution and, musicians and everybody, went with, but, that I don't think that that's necessarily a good way to solve a problem. Anyway, so one of the things that was interesting to me as someone who started, four years later than that, was that there are so many committees in the DSO that, out of that, we all

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: you know, the, I was not there for the strike.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: But, there were about 15 different committees, 15 to 20 different committees. There's a marketing committee, an orchestra committee, an artistic advisory committee, a DEI committee, a community engagement committee, finance committee, board committee, governing members committee, Trustees Committee, education committee. It's a little too much.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: To be totally honest. And we have tried to, like, make things a little bit more, concise.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: But the goal there was to say, you know what, we should be... everyone... we should have a musician at the table in these conversations as they happen, for... both so that we feel heard, but also so...

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: You have someone who goes back to the rest of the orchestra and says, well, this is what happens, this is the information, this is why this is happening, and it isn't... and it,

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00:12:18.550 --> 00:12:26.640

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Diffuses a potential us-versus-them mentality that can, crop up if there isn't that level of inclusion involved.

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00:12:26.820 --> 00:12:30.910

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And you know, I feel like during the,

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00:12:31.480 --> 00:12:40.640

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Since then, what's kind of grown out of that is that there is this culture of inclusion, and I have a few examples of that.

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00:12:40.640 --> 00:12:54.279

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: One is, you know, we have a... when we did our search for a music director, we actually have this put in our contract, and I think it's been in there for a long time, but we have, you know, musician, and

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00:12:54.740 --> 00:13:14.039

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: board and staff joint involvement in those decisions, so that we are sitting at a room making that decision together over the course of, you know, a handful of years most of the time. But that really makes it feel like, okay, well, we are... we are making this decision together as an... as an institution.

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00:13:15.090 --> 00:13:25.839

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: The other thing that I would bring up, is that then when the... by the time, you know, 2020 rolled around and the pandemic came, we had a lot of, culture of trust

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00:13:25.920 --> 00:13:50.460

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: rebuilt after, you know... and, so, what, what happened was we, and, you know, we, had a, you know, a force majeure and, had a, you know, a situation, but, we did continue to get compensation, and, also we had, we developed this, this was our CEO's idea of having an innovation committee, where, where there were a number of

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00:13:50.460 --> 00:13:55.429

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: of us musicians, and we got in, I think there were four to six of us.

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00:13:55.430 --> 00:13:58.300

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And we were involved in,

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: you know, and we got together with people and staff, and we said, you know, over Zoom, and said, what are we going to do to be an orchestra now? What can an orchestra do? And, I think that, you know, that was a really... actually a really big deal, in that time, because we were then able to have these collaborative projects.

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00:14:17.720 --> 00:14:19.039

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: That we're not, like.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: we're being assigned something, you know, but we're, like, sort of technically volunteering, but we're also getting, you know, it was just this sort of, like, nebulous thing. And having us being, all be involved in deciding what those kinds of projects were, and, you know, really gave us a sense of ownership over it, and I think it, continued to bring us

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00:14:39.950 --> 00:14:41.689

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Together as an institution.

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Sorry, the last thing that I would share is that I've been on the, I've been the chair of our Artistic Advisory Committee for the past several years. And I remember in the, you know, at one point, somebody,

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00:14:55.320 --> 00:15:06.209

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: mentioning about the Artistic Advisory Committee, like, oh, well, it's the Complainers Committee, you know, it's the committee for people to complain about, like, the, you know, this or that about the artistic output.

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00:15:06.440 --> 00:15:13.490

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: But, you know, I really see it as, and it has been functioning this way, as something where we are...

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: steering... we are helping to steer the ship of the orchestra in the same direction. You know, we all have...

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Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: shared artistic goals, and and I think that it's easy for people

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00:15:27.660 --> 00:15:45.410

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: I guess it's... I speak as a musician, like, sometimes I feel like if you don't feel a sense of efficacy, or you don't feel like you're being heard, or you don't feel like your values are being, represented in the programming, or like, we're not doing this, we're not doing that, that it's easy to lose,

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00:15:45.450 --> 00:15:56.749

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: sight of how we're all, like, move... trying to move in the same direction. And, it's much easier for... for someone in my position to go to the orchestra and say, you know, it's like the... this...

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00:15:56.750 --> 00:16:11.370

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: the staff does want to go on tour. You know, people... we do want to make this recording, we do want to do these kinds of things, but this is where the... this is where the budget is right now, or something like that, when we have that sort of...

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00:16:12.330 --> 00:16:18.960

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: back and forth, transparent communication that I think this... Webinar is all about.

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00:16:19.240 --> 00:16:20.680

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: So, thank you.

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00:16:22.160 --> 00:16:40.289

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah, Kevin, thank you so much for taking us through that, appreciating, how much you covered, and also just the honesty of, hey, maybe too many committees, but at the same time, really hearing how much they were a vehicle to facilitate conversation, communication, and

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00:16:40.430 --> 00:16:50.820

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: for the topic today, inclusion, and it's so important to have those vehicles, because again, intentionality, right? So, really appreciating your walking us through that.

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00:16:51.010 --> 00:17:03.529

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Maribeth, can we go over to Charlotte now and hear a little bit about your journey, and tell us a little bit about, kind of, what stands out to you as you built the culture that is currently driving the Charlotte Symphony?

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00:17:04.260 --> 00:17:19.599

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Yeah, I'd love to, you know, build on what Kevin shared, because I think there are some themes here that may be helpful to, you know, those who are joining us today. The idea of creating a space for collaboration.

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00:17:19.680 --> 00:17:26.740

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: For, you know, driving that accountability. So at the Charlotte Symphony, we really tied committees.

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00:17:26.920 --> 00:17:38.449

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: to our strategic plan. So that strategic plan really laid out the things that were the priorities of the organization, and building an inclusive culture was a top priority.

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00:17:38.450 --> 00:17:48.340

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: We had many priorities that supported that, whether it was innovation and hearing different ideas and providing a forum for those ideas to be shared.

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00:17:48.440 --> 00:17:53.660

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: or building audiences and community partnerships. So all of the committees

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00:17:54.080 --> 00:18:01.030

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: That were aligned to our strategic plan, were inclusive of

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00:18:01.030 --> 00:18:16.620

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: all of our key stakeholders. We have board members and musicians and staff members all coming together to really work on not just giving feedback, but taking action on advancing goals against all of these different priorities.

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00:18:16.620 --> 00:18:21.520

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: And I think being intentional about the process is really important.

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00:18:21.520 --> 00:18:27.470

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: culture and, you know, in my experience, doesn't just happen. You really have to plan.

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00:18:28.100 --> 00:18:42.300

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Get people engaged, and work toward specific goals. Not in a way that's too prescribed, because you definitely need to leave room for idea generation, you know, creativity.

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00:18:42.330 --> 00:18:54.290

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: But having a framework that keeps you focused and grounded in what the organizational priorities are, I think, can become a really important guide, for that.

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00:18:54.770 --> 00:19:10.330

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: the core values is something that we use as a very important guide for all the work we do, and that was one of the outcomes of our organizational Culture Committee. That was probably one of the first things that the committee undertook, was to

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00:19:10.330 --> 00:19:18.600

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Really, you know, start to articulate what are those values, what do we stand for, and how do we embed those in everything that we do?

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00:19:18.600 --> 00:19:31.250

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: How do we incorporate those in the decisions we make to, bring people into the organization, how to develop folks, and really, you know, use that as the foundation for the culture?

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00:19:33.930 --> 00:19:36.519

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah, thank you for that. So...

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Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Clearly a theme, right, around intentionality and establishing the right vehicles that are going to work for your orchestra. Thank you as well for naming the values piece.

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00:19:47.950 --> 00:20:04.289

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Because I think that is such an important building block of culture, right? It gives us something as an orchestra to anchor to, kind of, who are

we, what do we stand for, and thereby, we can build our culture on that. So, yeah, thank you so much, Maribeth, I appreciate that.

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00:20:04.290 --> 00:20:20.300

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, alright, as we continue our journey, can we go over to Arkansas? Christina, tell us a little bit about your inclusive journey, and again, what kind of stands out to you as you went about building the culture of the Arkansas Symphony?

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00:20:20.710 --> 00:20:30.629

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Alright, so first I just want to say that I'm, like, I'm very humbled to represent the symphony here. Like, it's just so nice, I'm like, oh my gosh, those were anonymous survey results.

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00:20:31.300 --> 00:20:54.970

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And I just think I work for a very special organization. Part of our culture, I would say it got anchored during 2009. We had a financial crisis, and in order to get out of it, we had to do all-in, all play. All in, all sacrifice, and the musicians and the staff had to take a pay cut, and in exchange... and then the board tripled their giving.

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00:20:54.970 --> 00:21:02.809

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So, that was how we got out of it. We put together a financial recovery task force, a musicians, board, and staff, leaders.

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00:21:03.010 --> 00:21:27.950

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And we made these decisions together, and so we made the decisions of... so... so that set the stage. And then moving forward, all our committees include the three groups. But I would say moving forward, one of the things that really helped in that process was the whole idea of... of treating people with respect. Like, because we had made their sacrifices, everyone

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00:21:27.950 --> 00:21:36.809

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: was choosing to stay and to keep working for the Arkansas Symphony. They were all making these choices, and so it was important...

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00:21:36.850 --> 00:21:48.090

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: It was important, if they're making the choices to stay, that we respected and treated people with... with respect, right? And so one of the things that we do and spend a lot of time on, money on is professional development.

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00:21:48.100 --> 00:22:09.369

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So we spend professional development resources on staff members, and even on musicians as well, and I feel that that's really important. We all get one life. People are choosing to be with us, and that's their... we're their journey. So if we can support people on their journey, then that's what we want to do. And that's important to our board, and our staff, and...

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00:22:09.370 --> 00:22:17.010

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Just this week, we, invested in one of our musicians to go to conducting training, because that was important to him and his next journey.

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00:22:17.060 --> 00:22:30.759

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So, also, because it was hard work, and we had to sacrifice, and that was... and make hard decisions, and then keep moving forward, another thing that we felt was really important and we established was the idea of celebration.

114

00:22:31.190 --> 00:22:46.730

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And having fun, because you can't just... you can't just work really hard and not laugh a little, right? So there's gotta be some levity, there's gotta be some joy, otherwise people will take off and go choose to be somewhere else. And so,

115

00:22:46.910 --> 00:23:11.869

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So our staff likes to play pranks. I remember a time I came home from vacation, came back from vacation, and they had filled my entire office with balloons. Could not get into it, because it was filled with balloons. And so we like to do pranks. We also like to do, at the end of the fiscal year, we do a joint board staff meeting, board of advisors, and we have a big meeting, and we celebrate. We say, what was your favorite moment?

116

00:23:11.870 --> 00:23:28.010

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: there's champagne there, we do champagne toast, and we talk about what was our favorite moment of the year. At the opening concert, we go backstage and do a champagne toast as well, with the musicians and the staff and the board and the board of advisors. So again, it's, it's...

117

00:23:28.110 --> 00:23:37.279

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: it's not... it's important to work hard, and our staff and our team here have great aspirations. During COVID,

118

00:23:37.280 --> 00:24:00.760

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: During COVID, what happened was we did manage to... we were able to keep all full-time musicians and staff employed, and we paid our per-service musicians what we could. And one of our... our concertmaster came up with the idea of Bedtime with Bach. So he wanted to make sure we were serving the community with music, and he came up with Bedtime with Bach, and asked if he could do it, and we said absolutely, and our staff figured out how to make sure it could happen.

119

00:24:00.760 --> 00:24:15.919

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And so for 100 nights, at 9 o'clock, every night, one of our musicians gave a lullaby. And it was something that everyone could count on, so our audience, our... everyone could count on at 9 o'clock, there was going to be a lullaby by Arkansas Symphony Musician.

120

00:24:15.920 --> 00:24:26.029

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: That got picked up by Washington Post, and it got picked up by CNN, and then Drew was on with Kelly Clarkson, talking about it. So overall, a million people saw it from 30 different countries.

121

00:24:26.260 --> 00:24:49.350

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So again, it was that spirit of celebrating the human, and if Drew has a great idea, let's just go for it, and following through. And it was important that, to our board, that we kept everyone employed. And I was the one that was like, oh, can we afford it? All of my friends are, like, everyone I know is taking a pay cut, and she's like, no, we're gonna do it. We're just gonna keep paying people until we find out that we can't.

122

00:24:49.590 --> 00:25:14.479

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And because we had everyone employed, we were able to... our annual fund went up, our retention of subscribers, and maybe we had one subscriber that wanted a refund, like, we were able to continue, and then we had Bedtime with Block, and we had free concerts, and we had... we're doing all this stuff, so because we were here, we were also able to raise money for the Music Center, which is our new, beautiful home that we opened last year. But because of that, like, the staff retention was so key.

123

00:25:14.480 --> 00:25:34.060

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: lost staff and turned over staff during that time, then we wouldn't have been able to do all of those things. And the musicians, when you treat... when we're all treated like... like we should... like, we should be as human beings, then it makes it easier for the shared purpose of collaborations and negotiations and,

124

00:25:34.480 --> 00:25:37.160

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And we all just like having fun together, so...

125

00:25:39.220 --> 00:25:52.500

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I love that. I feel like I need to visit. I also like a good prank and a champagne toast, so I'm just thinking, like, maybe I need to head your way? Thank you so much for naming that. You're right, right? Like, there is that notion of being human together.

126

00:25:52.500 --> 00:26:07.520

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: And being able to enjoy each other, and have fun together, because we are so ultimately dedicated to this art form, right? And that is something that we so much have in common. So, yeah, really appreciating that.

127

00:26:07.650 --> 00:26:27.229

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: you all mentioned some specific parts of your infrastructure, so we heard about committee structure, we heard about professional development, we heard about, kind of, the notion of idea generation, and how we get those from inception to implementation. So, can we stay on that for a little while? Because we know that

128

00:26:27.230 --> 00:26:45.669

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: culture is, like, it's ethereal, right? We can't touch it, we can't feel it, but infrastructure that helps us sustain culture over time, infrastructure helps us build culture, infrastructure helps us make the ethereal actually tangible.

129

00:26:45.670 --> 00:26:49.930

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, can we talk a little bit about infrastructure, and kind of

130

00:26:49.930 --> 00:27:05.770

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: how you all... what you put in place to support your culture of inclusion. So, the things that... that we... that Karen talked about at the top of our hour, so things like collaboration and transparency. What... what were the... the tangible things that you all built?

131

00:27:05.770 --> 00:27:19.880

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: to make those other things that contribute to an inclusive culture happen? You know, and how did they reinforce your values, your orchestral values, in day-to-day life? So, Marybeth, I'm wondering if we could start with you, and you could talk a little bit about infrastructure.

132

00:27:20.340 --> 00:27:34.320

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Definitely. So, you know, kind of going back to the whole idea of being really intentional and having a plan, again, making it real and, you know, fun, too,

133

00:27:34.320 --> 00:27:44.940

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: I'll give you kind of a range of different examples. So, we have always, with our core values, looked at ourselves as one CSO. We are one organization.

134

00:27:45.220 --> 00:27:56.549

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: all of the stakeholders together, you know, working together as one, and that means you really need to get to know one another. You need to develop relationships, build that trust.

135

00:27:56.720 --> 00:28:08.590

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: And so it could be a small but very impactful, you know, team that plans some social gatherings, some get-togethers. You know, we have,

136

00:28:08.590 --> 00:28:19.620

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: number of different things that we do throughout the year, from a Chipotle lunch day to, you know, a happy hour with musicians, you know, as well, and...

137

00:28:19.870 --> 00:28:26.229

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: We have communication services throughout the year that might be a little bit more formal, where we're trying to...

138

00:28:26.310 --> 00:28:42.749

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Communicate and be transparent and share information that is very relevant to everyone, but also making sure that there's time to get to know one another and develop those personal relationships in those spaces also.

139

00:28:43.040 --> 00:29:02.499

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: The other, example I would highlight around infrastructure that we're pretty proud of is the work that we did on our audition and tenure practices, and making sure that they were very transparent, very inclusive, and specifically with the tenure practices, we had just the most tremendous support

140

00:29:02.860 --> 00:29:20.410

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: and collaboration with our musician representatives. Everyone really wanted the same outcomes and worked very hard together to incorporate this into our agreement that was negotiated last year, really building out the detail, a timeline, so that everyone knew what to expect.

141

00:29:20.410 --> 00:29:30.349

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: And then partnering with our director of personnel to have a musician orientation, you know, brand new musicians coming in the door have the chance to sit down and understand

142

00:29:30.350 --> 00:29:39.249

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: here's how the process is going to go, here's how we're going to support you through that process. Having it laid out very, very clearly. So, making sure that

143

00:29:39.820 --> 00:29:58.700

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: the infrastructure, I'm so glad that we're bringing this up and talking about it, because there are ways in which we can put these, you know, aspects in place with just the planning, just some intentionality, to make sure that we can not only have these great ideas, but actually follow through.

144

00:30:01.300 --> 00:30:08.679

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah, thank you so much for that. Thank you for naming it, and it is... it is so incredibly important to look at all of the aspects.

145

00:30:08.740 --> 00:30:15.339

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah, and thank you as well for naming what you were doing around audition and tenure, and...

146

00:30:15.340 --> 00:30:39.000

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Definitely, and by the way, I'm seeing folks, mention some of their experiences in the chat, and for those of you who have experiences to share, we do... we are going to open it up, at the end of our... our more formal conversation. We do want to

open it up, so just be thinking about if you have something to share. We're not going to put anybody on the spot or anything like that, but we really welcome... there is wisdom everywhere.

147

00:30:39.070 --> 00:30:56.680

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Including everyone on this webinar, so do... do feel comfortable in sharing that as we come to that in a little while. So let's continue to talk about infrastructure, and Kevin, can you talk to us a little bit about how you all... you mentioned the committee structure.

148

00:30:56.680 --> 00:31:06.070

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Talk to us a little bit, also, about kind of really building in practices around communications, and how did you all go about that?

149

00:31:07.440 --> 00:31:25.030

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Yeah, well, I think, you know, the committee structure thing is, is big because, you know, part of, you know, the advantage of having a lot of committees, I guess, is that you have more people who are involved in, more... on more levels. You know, some orchestras, if it's just one... a committee or two, then,

150

00:31:25.300 --> 00:31:40.420

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: you know, then that... it's like a... it's a smaller group of people that are, that are doing that. So that infrastructure helps. One thing that the executive team started doing a couple years ago, and maybe it was a couple years before that they even started, but,

151

00:31:40.590 --> 00:31:49.419

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: It's just coming and having a regular, you know, maybe 3 times a season, having a meeting with the musicians, and just...

152

00:31:49.420 --> 00:32:13.300

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Coming in and saying, well, this is the financial situation, this is the artistic situation, this is our ticket sales situation, this is what's been going on, and taking questions, taking, you know, but, you know, not everybody goes to those meetings, but, you know, it is, it is something that, makes it so that people feel a sense of transparency, which, would... and also just kind of, you know, for a while.

153

00:32:13.300 --> 00:32:14.889

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: We were doing them in this,

154

00:32:14.890 --> 00:32:23.810

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: in a room that was, like, really large, you know? We were doing them in kind of our second performance space that we rent out for things.

155

00:32:23.810 --> 00:32:36.630

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And have events in. But we decided to move them back into the musician's lounge, just because it's, like, a little bit less of a, well, we're giving this formal speech, to this... to this big group of people, and a little bit more, like.

156

00:32:36.680 --> 00:32:46.129

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: We're people, your people, let's talk and, you know, make space for there to be a little bit of conversation about what's going on with the orchestra.

157

00:32:46.130 --> 00:32:58.699

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: So, you know, and then we do have, social events and things like that that, that will kind of pop up. I don't know if... the one thing that happens... that does happen regularly is that every year we have the DSO Day of Service.

158

00:32:58.700 --> 00:33:12.000

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: So if you saw, I think there was a photo of the DSO, it was of us on the day of service, at a, you know, helping out at a local farm, you know, or there will have several different options of things that you can do.

159

00:33:12.380 --> 00:33:27.449

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And, you know, that's one of the times that, you know, you'll end up hanging out with... I'll end up hanging out with the CEO and getting our hands literally dirty. Or, you know, we've had other things that you do, you know, just you can make a donation or, make a...

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00:33:27.820 --> 00:33:33.090

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: t-shirt. There's a lot... we always have several options, but it's different from year to year.

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00:33:33.210 --> 00:33:38.910

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Another thing that I would just kind of mention, that comes to mind,

162

00:33:38.940 --> 00:33:56.659

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: you know, I think the way that you... there are certain things that you can do on committees, I guess, that you might... I might mention, that we have, like, a system of... an infrastructure within the Artistic Advisory Committee, for example, about how we do conductor feedback, or, so that we'll have a guest conductor, and then

163

00:33:56.660 --> 00:34:11.700

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And then, you know, within a certain time frame, we'll, provide, like, a conductor score and feedback about the... about how the week went, with enough time for the person who's making the next engagement to be able to talk to their managers about.

164

00:34:11.960 --> 00:34:27.309

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: you know, whether or not to try to get them to come back right away, or, you know, that kind of thing. But so there's some infrastructure there that makes us feel heard and makes the, you know, the people on the administrative side have the information that they want.

165

00:34:27.440 --> 00:34:36.949

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: But the last thing I'd mention is that we, recently wrapped up this, Artistic Excellence Task Force, which, was,

166

00:34:36.949 --> 00:34:56.429

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: a, which was a project where we're trying to set common artistic goals. And this was separate from the Artistic Advisory Committee, but we had members... we had members of, you know, we nominated people, musicians, there was obviously lots of staff, president and CEO was involved, and, members of the board and governing members.

167

00:34:56.429 --> 00:35:05.990

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Who all got together for this task force, and it was... and, to just talk about what... how things are going artistically. And, what...

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00:35:06.150 --> 00:35:11.430

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Came out of that is that we all have a common language that we can talk about.

169

00:35:11.550 --> 00:35:24.699

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: now, where we, where we're like, okay, well, this is what we said we're trying to do. You know, this is what we're interested in doing, and it involved, like, doing studies with other orchestras, getting in touch with what

170

00:35:24.700 --> 00:35:45.080

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: other orchestras are doing that, and just kind of taking a look at that. And it really feels now like we are all kind of on the same page about where we want to be going artistically. And it was, you know, of course, it's like a messy process here, having all these conversations with all these different interested parties, but,

171

00:35:45.080 --> 00:35:50.819

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: But that was another thing that, was... that I think is, you know, I would count as infrastructure, even if it's,

172

00:35:51.190 --> 00:35:56.210

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: It's ongoing now, only in that we have these sort of takeaways.

173

00:35:58.030 --> 00:36:13.619

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Thank you so much for that. No, I... I love that. I... I love the fact I... even the intentionality around the space in which you were meeting, right? Because that cha... I mean, we know this, right? Because... or we know this as... as it affects performances.

174

00:36:13.650 --> 00:36:26.679

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: The space matters, and it creates a sense of cohesion and community and safety. And so I really... I love that. I also love hearing about the volunteer day, because we are so much.

175

00:36:26.680 --> 00:36:45.209

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: part of our communities, and a way to make that also tangible, for ourselves, for the community. The community gets to see us, we get to interact with them, we get to interact with each other. So, really appreciating so many of the things that you mentioned. Want to stay on this notion. You had mentioned, kind of, the ability to give feedback.

176

00:36:45.390 --> 00:36:59.790

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: And we know that one of the things that works in giving feedback is for people to feel like they can say what needs to be said, right? So feeling a sense of not just inclusion, but again, safety.

177

00:36:59.790 --> 00:37:06.370

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: In being able to give feedback, give input that they want to, because it's not always like, hey, everything's going great.

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00:37:06.370 --> 00:37:11.399

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, can we talk a little bit about some of the actions that you all have taken?

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00:37:11.400 --> 00:37:20.399

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: To build up that sense of safety within your orchestras, so that people can say what they need to, or take a risk.

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00:37:20.460 --> 00:37:43.770

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: or suggest something that might be an innovation or a new practice. So, Christina, to you, can we hear a little bit more about... because you

clearly have had those moments of innovation where people said, hey, let's do bedtime with Bach, and then you actually did it! So clearly there is a sense of innovation and creativity that is fueled by the

181

00:37:43.770 --> 00:37:46.770

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: By feeling safe to make those suggestions.

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00:37:46.770 --> 00:37:49.320

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Tell us a little bit about how you created that.

183

00:37:50.080 --> 00:38:04.170

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Well, another thing I was thinking about for our guys, we have big goals, we have aspirations, and when we achieve them together, we celebrate those ones together. So, that's really important.

184

00:38:04.300 --> 00:38:15.850

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: We... okay, I think... I think our team's probably gonna kill me for saying this, but we have one rule at the symphony that the staff jokes about, but not really a joke, and it's that the one rule is that no one dies at the symphony.

185

00:38:16.880 --> 00:38:41.840

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And where that... how that comes into play here is that innovative ideas, they... if they work, they work, great. And if they don't, it's fine, because we're not doing brain surgery here. Let's try it. We have a big goal, we want to fill the house, we have a shared purpose, let's go for it, and let's try new things. And so one of the things that we do here is we have the concert membership.

186

00:38:41.840 --> 00:39:05.990

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Which is new, so... but now we have 1,100 members. There was a moment in time where we were afraid to lean into it, and in 2023, we were like, why are we... why are we not leaning into promoting this? Like, no one dies at the symphony, let's go for it! Let's see what happens. We already have the data to back it up. And so now we have 1,100 concert members. And there's... when we did the Music Center, when we did the grand opening.

187

00:39:05.990 --> 00:39:28.769

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: We're not that big of an orchestra. Our budget's, like, \$4 million, \$4.5 million, but we wanted to do a whole weekend of celebration, and so I really wanted a parade. And I wanted a parade to open the hall, the music center, and probably a lot of people thought it was crazy, but then we went for it, because we were just going to go for it, because we had this big goal, and it all worked out. Everyone went for it.

188

00:39:28.770 --> 00:39:45.300

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: They achieved it, and then we all got to celebrate it together. The board, the task forces, the community members, the staff, the musicians, and we're all so proud of what everyone here accomplished together. So I think some of the safety is, we're gonna shoot big, and if we don't make it, that's fine.

189

00:39:45.300 --> 00:40:09.070

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: no one dies at the symphony, so... and we're also going to learn from whatever it is that we tried, and it didn't necessarily achieve what it was, but it's... we also have a state... we also tend to say around here, fail forward, iterative learning, so that is just... And I think, you know, hopefully our musicians feel that, because they have to go for it when they're playing their instruments, right? They have to go for it when they're playing.

190

00:40:09.070 --> 00:40:27.100

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Our music director is all for it, so he's... he's a musician himself, he still plays chamber music with our musicians, so he's listening, he's part of it. Yeah, and for the parade, he was gonna... I'm sure he would have killed me, but I did... I commissioned a giant puppet of him.

191

00:40:27.100 --> 00:40:47.670

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And he didn't know anything about it, and so at the parade, he saw it for the first time, and it was leading the parade, this giant puppet of Jeff Robson. And it was... he... he was ready to kill me, but he was like, okay, that's alright. So that's what I mean. We shoot big, we aim high, and if it fails, it fails, but we're all moving towards the same goal. And if it wins, we all get to celebrate together.

192

00:40:49.310 --> 00:40:52.199

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I love everything about what you just said, and like.

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00:40:52.870 --> 00:41:09.280

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: never mind that we just introduced a different art form onto this call as well. We just got into, like, parade puppetry, so just... just want to say that we heard that air first. So, no, I'm loving this, and I love the idea, too, that you just said about, you know.

194

00:41:09.700 --> 00:41:25.160

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: no one dies at the symphony. Like, innovation is okay, taking risks is okay. I think that's so, so hugely important, and that is such a big piece of safety. Just knowing that we're leading from that place is tremendous.

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00:41:25.160 --> 00:41:30.779

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I'm curious as to... Maribeth, you said something earlier, you touched on.

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00:41:31.070 --> 00:41:46.200

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: The specifics around your evolving practices, around audition and tenure, and we know that those in orchestras are places of stress, and they can certainly be places that are not as inclusive.

197

00:41:46.200 --> 00:42:03.329

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Historically, they have not necessarily been as inclusive, or at a minimum, they can certainly appear opaque to people. So I'm wondering if you wanted to just add to that a little bit with any... or add some specificity to that, which you've already mentioned.

198

00:42:03.780 --> 00:42:05.860

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: around, kind of, again, building up that safety.

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00:42:07.560 --> 00:42:24.890

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Yeah, I think the most important part is, this is such a wonderful community in sharing, best practices. When I think about some of the external forces, the Black Orchestral Network, for example, and the letter that they shared.

200

00:42:24.890 --> 00:42:34.259

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: certainly something that made a very strong impression on our organization, and just being able to share, just, you know, settings like this, thank you so much for putting this together.

201

00:42:34.260 --> 00:42:49.010

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Because the more we can share with one another, we can all continue to grow and advance. But, you know, for our audition and tenure practices, you know, really learning and understanding what some of those best practices looked like.

202

00:42:49.460 --> 00:43:01.490

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Having the relationships with our musicians and really hearing their thoughts and their ideas, hearing about their experiences, what could have made this process better for you.

203

00:43:01.600 --> 00:43:18.219

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: and really incorporating that dialogue back into, you know, coming together. And as I mentioned earlier, there was such a strong partnership in, you know, all parties wanting to really make this process

204

00:43:18.220 --> 00:43:24.100

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: As, you know, supportive and transparent as possible, made it very...

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00:43:24.110 --> 00:43:30.100

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: easy to collaborate and to work through and to implement. I think it's the...

206

00:43:30.340 --> 00:43:37.069

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: You can write a lot of things down, and that's great, but it's really how you put it into practice.

207

00:43:37.290 --> 00:43:45.509

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: And, you know, whether it's sitting down with musicians when they start in the organization, checking in with them, as time

208

00:43:45.510 --> 00:44:01.669

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Progresses during that first, you know, critical year, just making sure that they're feeling the support, just wrapping that whole support network around, and hearing the feedback, being open to what you might hear in terms of improvements that can be made along the way.

209

00:44:01.670 --> 00:44:20.159

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: It's the listening. I think organizations really can continue to grow their culture when there are two-way communications, and you're listening as much as you're sharing, and you have those mechanisms for feedback to, you know, to come to you, and taking action on that feedback is really important.

210

00:44:21.430 --> 00:44:36.330

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I love what you just said, because... and it... and it builds so nicely on some of what you mentioned earlier, Kevin, as well, is there's a notion of creating, kind of, the ways to incorporate... to give feedback, right, and creating that space.

211

00:44:36.330 --> 00:44:58.339

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So there is the notion of creating safety for giving feedback, but then there is the actual listening. Like, people can say things, but the question is, is who's really listening? And then there is the absorption and putting it into practice, right? And it may not be wholesale, like, oh, yes, we're going to take every single piece of feedback we get and act on it. That's... that's not a realistic...

212

00:44:58.470 --> 00:45:09.880

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: way to go about it, because chances are good, every piece of feedback that you get, you're not going to be able to act on. But, you know, I'm hearing from all of you that there is this notion of creating the safety and giving the feedback.

213

00:45:09.880 --> 00:45:20.330

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: really hearing and listening, and then vetting it, and thinking about, so what can we implement from this? What can we learn from this, and really using that lens?

214

00:45:20.330 --> 00:45:43.299

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, I... I really appreciate that. And... and so if we can stay with this notion, too, of lessons and what you've learned, etc, can we... can we hear from all of you about lessons learned during this journey? I'm conscious that we're... we're gonna wrap up our time together soon, but wanted to just come back to each of you to talk about.

215

00:45:43.300 --> 00:46:04.599

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: you know, are there... are there things that you would... that you have learned, things that you might do differently, if... if you had it to do over again, or a lesson that you might share with others? Because we do have so many people here listening intently, for their own orchestras. So, Kevin, can I start with you, and then we'll go around and hear from everybody about lessons?

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00:46:07.000 --> 00:46:15.859

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Sure, I mean, I guess I just would say, well, thank you again for having us, but, also, you know, one thing that I think is,

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00:46:16.010 --> 00:46:26.840

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: just, picking up on some things that, Marybeth talked about, with the audition processes, the... and tenure processes, that, I think...

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00:46:27.100 --> 00:46:34.090

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: I just wouldn't take for granted that, that communication is... always clear.

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00:46:34.510 --> 00:46:41.070

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: You know, and also that, you know, we have, like, for a long time in the DSO, we have had this,

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00:46:41.120 --> 00:46:56.000

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: communication process for, people going through the ten... you know, going through tenure, where it's, like, written feedback that goes through the, personnel office. And, you know, recently we, changed that, because a lot of times, even if it's,

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00:46:56.130 --> 00:47:05.459

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: But what that does is it makes it so that the communication is not really inclusive in the ways that we're talking about now. There's no sort of back and forth.

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00:47:05.460 --> 00:47:18.130

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: And, so what we've added as, I guess, another piece of infrastructure in our more recent contract is that we now have, like, a tenure advocate who's a musician who can sort of

223

00:47:18.170 --> 00:47:32.100

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: go along with... I think other orchestras have something similar. But who's a musician who goes along with, someone going through the tenure process, and, can be a go-between between the committee or the,

224

00:47:32.100 --> 00:47:45.999

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: music director, you know, somebody who's comfortable just kind of asking some questions that somebody is not necessarily comfortable with, given the strange power dynamic. And that that kind of, you know, creates those kinds of things.

225

00:47:46.340 --> 00:48:04.270

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: The other thing is that just that, I feel like it's, to underscore is it's an ongoing commitment to, inclusion, that it's not like, you know, it's not like you can necessarily just put systems in place. It has to be that you have a, have a continuous, effort being,

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00:48:04.270 --> 00:48:15.730

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: put toward that. And I would mention that also as something, just currently, we still have the option of doing trials, we still have the option of doing,

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00:48:17.140 --> 00:48:34.689

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: super final rounds with... without a screen and some... if there's some kind of ensemble, purpose. But setting the intention that it's like, well, we really would, you know, we would want to have a really good reason to do that, you know, that it's like, the intention is, well, can we... are we going to be able to make

228

00:48:34.730 --> 00:48:50.150

Kevin Brown, Detroit Symphony Orchestra: a decision based on just this, on the blind audition to keep the, certain things out of their, out of the realm of possibility. So, you know, just that it takes continuous intention to keep these kinds of things happening.

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00:48:51.760 --> 00:49:05.129

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah, thank you for that, and I... I would be remiss in not mentioning, and Karen, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the next Catalyst Guide that is coming up is actually going to focus on audition and tenure practices. Is that... is that right?

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00:49:05.380 --> 00:49:06.290

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: parent yet.

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00:49:06.390 --> 00:49:30.540

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Thank you. So, yeah, absolutely. So, spoiler alert, stay tuned for that, and thank you for mentioning that, and thank you for also, naming kind of the ongoing nature of this work. It's not kind of a one-and-done, it's not, you know, we did the thing, we had the lunch, we had the meeting, we did the parade, or any of the things. It is ongoing, and it's ongoing intentionality.

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00:49:30.630 --> 00:49:44.349

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: around this, and that is so incredibly important. So, thank you, Kevin, for mentioning that. Christina, can we go over to you and hear a little bit about what you might share as a lesson learned, or, based on your own experiences?

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00:49:44.600 --> 00:49:46.650

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Yeah. So...

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00:49:47.060 --> 00:50:11.990

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So... so I just recently hiked Mount Kilimanjaro, and one of the lessons from that was the African proverb, thank you, but it was, if you want to go far... if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. And I... I think that's, like, the important lesson, like, our... I think having a shared purpose or a shared vision is so important, so

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00:50:11.990 --> 00:50:21.780

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: If we want a shared vision, then who needs to be at the table helping create the vision? It's the musicians, the board, and the staff together. So we create it together. And...

236

00:50:21.980 --> 00:50:35.240

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And also the thought of thinking through in terms of abundance. Again, if you want to go far, go together, and... and not sitting in a space of fear, but sitting in a space of, what if the best thing happened?

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00:50:35.360 --> 00:50:39.880

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: And carrying that message through in your spaces together.

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00:50:41.320 --> 00:50:45.460

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So I think that's... that would do it for us. I think those are some lessons for us.

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00:50:45.460 --> 00:50:55.589

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah, that's dropping a lot of wisdom. So, really appreciating that, yeah. Yeah, what... I mean, we do that, right? We... when we do even scenario planning, we think about, like.

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00:50:55.640 --> 00:51:13.739

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: okay, let's do low, medium, high. And it's like, well, what if the low didn't happen? Like, what if, you know, what if... what if all the good stuff happens? So, I love that reframing, and I love the callback to that proverb about if you want to go far, you go together.

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00:51:13.940 --> 00:51:21.590

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: That's really, really helpful, and so, so incredibly wise. Thank you for that. And congratulations! That is amazing!

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00:51:22.710 --> 00:51:27.830

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I mean, way to hold back on that big piece of information, I think that's huge.

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00:51:27.830 --> 00:51:28.809

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Thank you.

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00:51:28.810 --> 00:51:39.020

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Absolutely, absolutely, I aspire. Maribeth, over to you. What would you share as a lesson learned at the Charlotte Symphony?

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00:51:39.880 --> 00:51:59.310

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: I think there's space to get everybody involved in this work. You know, we talked a lot about committees and, you know, they may have a definition of, you know, a number of people and representatives who are there, but there's a role for everyone to play, because together we are this culture. We all...

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00:51:59.310 --> 00:52:10.530

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: embody this every day, whether we're here or out in the community, we're representing it. So I think there's space and room for everyone to feel like they play a part in it, and have a role in it.

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00:52:10.530 --> 00:52:14.030

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: And it's not a set it and forget it. When I think about.

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00:52:14.380 --> 00:52:32.100

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: several years ago, when we created core values for the organization, those core values are always going to be at the center of all we do, but we ask ourselves all the time, is there a way to make it more clear? Is there a way to make it more understood? Is there a way to make this more memorable for folks?

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00:52:32.230 --> 00:52:45.950

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: Without changing, you know, what they are at their very, essence. So, it's continuous work. It's, you know, it's constant, and there's a role for everyone to play.

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00:52:46.880 --> 00:52:54.659

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I love what you just said about we still... we hold the values as constant, but we come back to them and ask

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00:52:55.400 --> 00:53:01.910

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: how we could evolve in the way we talk about them, or the way we communicate. So that is such an interesting balance, right, of...

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00:53:02.230 --> 00:53:16.450

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: steadfast anchoring, and yet ongoing kind of being curious, being inquisitive, and evolving. I mean, that's... what a great balance. That's so helpful. Thank you. Thank you for that framing.

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00:53:16.450 --> 00:53:40.809

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, and thank you all, by the way, again, for sharing your stories via the guide today. We so appreciate you, and we so appreciate the work that you do. I know that we're in our last few minutes together, and I just want to throw it out to anyone who might be attending. If you have a particular story that you'd like to share about your, inclusion journey, or your culture journey.

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00:53:40.830 --> 00:53:44.990

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: We would love to hear from you, and or if anyone has a question.

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00:53:46.720 --> 00:54:04.109

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Yeah, we actually have a question in the Q&A just come in for Teach, from Erin Brookermiller, who would like... she says, I'm curious to hear ideas on how smaller budget orchestras, whether for service and part-time orchestras or a festival, can still accomplish culture and inclusion goals despite the limited time that they have physically together.

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00:54:04.260 --> 00:54:04.840

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Yeah.

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00:54:05.480 --> 00:54:19.960

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Erin, what a great question, and relevant to so many. I'm curious as to, what your thoughts are on that. Christina, I saw you, come off mute, and I didn't know if that meant you... you wanted to jump in on that, or I could have just put you on the spot. I don't know.

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00:54:19.960 --> 00:54:37.799

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: No, no, no, I did. Well, before Little Rock, before Arkansas Symphony, one of my other jobs was, I was the CEO of Mobile Symphony, and one of the things we did that was so powerful was when we had double rehearsals, we fed the orchestra, so that they were sitting together, and...

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00:54:37.800 --> 00:54:45.159

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Staff was there too, but it was more just... it was the breaking of bread was... it was just a really good reminder to me that

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00:54:45.160 --> 00:55:02.619

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: So, even if you're per service, there's still an opportunity... there's got to be an opportunity to have a meal together. Just somehow having that meal together gives you a chance to... you're all equal eating together, so you can't... that's a good place to bond. So I would look for those spaces,

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00:55:03.070 --> 00:55:09.070

Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: because I know there's a space, even if it's before rehearsal, and it was just really helpful for us and Mobile to do that.

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00:55:10.300 --> 00:55:19.349

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: Oh, that's... that's brilliant. So, taking the time to bring people together, even if... if you're not together all the time, or on a regular basis, because it's part-time, or...

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00:55:19.350 --> 00:55:35.390

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: whatever, but having... having those kind of shared spaces, shared experiences, bringing people together. Kevin and Maribeth, I didn't know if you wanted to just quickly chime in on that as well, because we do have so many in our community that are smaller and smaller budget orchestras, so Maribeth, go ahead.

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00:55:35.650 --> 00:55:48.690

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: It's just a lot of little things. I loved Christina's example on, you know, everyone needs to eat a meal, and that's easy enough to bring people together. It could be as simple as a thank you note. It could be as simple as showing up.

265

00:55:48.730 --> 00:56:03.730

Maribeth Baker, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra: You know, having, when our, you know, we open our season, all of our staff are standing on stage with the musicians and our music director for the, for the rehearsal, and it can be as simple as showing up and saying thank you to people.

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00:56:04.450 --> 00:56:17.459

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: I love that. I love that. Small, and something... and sometimes we dismiss those things as being small, but big impact. Because again, the humanness, right? The humanness of us all.

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00:56:17.460 --> 00:56:35.350

Pratichi Shah, Flourish Talent Management Solutions: So, yeah, you guys, thank you again so, so much. I'm gonna hand it over to Karen for last words, but do check out the guide. Know that the other, that the upcoming guide is gonna focus on auditions and tenure. And again, Maribeth, Kevin, and Christina, thank you all so much for sharing your stories and your wisdom.

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00:56:36.240 --> 00:56:46.489

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Yeah, thank you so much to the three of you, and to thank you to everyone who contributed in the chat. It was lovely to hear your stories as well. So many insights, and so much that we can take away. Thank you.

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00:56:46.510 --> 00:57:10.659

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: So before we depart, just a quick reminder that everyone who's registered today will receive the recording of this session, together with a transcript and a set of slides, and we appreciate your feedback at any time. Please complete the evaluation form that will also be coming your way, or reach out to any of us individually. And our next webinar is scheduled for December the 8th, and it's an orientation for new board members.

270

00:57:10.660 --> 00:57:23.800

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: to introduce people to the field and the league, so please share that widely. It's got very good feedback when we ran it for the first time last year, and we're looking forward to engaging more board members with that material again this year.

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00:57:23.800 --> 00:57:25.610

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: Thank you, everyone, for joining us!

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00:57:25.890 --> 00:57:28.379

Karen Yair (she/her) League of American Orchestras: See you soon. Take care. Bye.