

Anne Parsons Leadership Program

June 2026 to June 2027

Program Overview and Application Guidelines

Anne Parsons was a giant in the orchestra field. An institutional and civic leader of tremendous vision and presence, Anne was known across the orchestra profession as someone who led from culture—and it was through cultural transformation that she brought the Detroit Symphony Orchestra out from its darkest days to being one of the country's most vibrant orchestral institutions.

Anne was beloved by those who knew and worked with her, but above all she was a role model to women on their journey to leadership positions, and to those already in leadership positions who aspired to her level of skill, finesse, and deep authenticity.

To honor Anne's life and legacy as a transformational leader and mentor, the League has established the **Anne Parsons Leadership Program**.

The Anne Parsons Leadership Program is designed to build greater gender diversity in leadership roles in the country's 50 largest-budget orchestras: 70% of larger orchestras currently have men as executive directors. Research shows that as well as creating fair opportunities for all, gender diversity at senior levels in organizations improves decision-making and performance, strengthens organizational culture, and enhances creativity. The program aims to advance a new generation of candidates with the capacity to take on C-suite roles in major orchestras as well as building a culture of mentorship, coaching, and support across the orchestra field. Participation in the program is free of charge.

For the June 2026 to June 2027 program, six participants will be selected based on demonstrated experience, vision for the field, and commitment to leading, serving, and building greater gender diversity in leadership roles in American orchestras. All applicants, whether accepted to the Anne Parsons Leadership Program or not, will receive a one-year professional membership to the League of American Orchestras. The League especially encourages applicants from backgrounds that have been historically underrepresented in the orchestral field.

Applicant Eligibility and Those Who Could Benefit

The Anne Parsons Leadership Program is designed to build greater gender diversity in leadership roles in the country's 50 largest-budget orchestras and welcomes applications from individuals who have either 5 years of professional experience in the orchestra field or are currently in an executive leadership role in orchestras or comparable music organizations (including music festivals and arts organizations).

The program serves professionals who want to serve in executive leadership roles and those who want to move up in their executive leadership. Examples of individuals who could benefit from this program include:

- Current orchestra executive leaders with the motivation to advance to a larger-budget organization
- Individuals who aspire to their first C-suite role in an American orchestra and have demonstrated orchestral leadership initiative (participating in leadership training opportunities, taking lead on collaborative projects, etc.)
- Alumni of the League's longstanding leadership programs (Emerging Leaders Program, Essentials of Orchestra Management, Orchestra Management Fellowship Program, etc.)
- Orchestral musicians looking to transition into administrative orchestral leadership roles
- Leaders and aspiring leaders who have a successful track record of at least 5 years of employment in orchestras or comparable music organizations (including music festivals and arts organizations) and wish to progress on a path to lead an American orchestra

After completing the Anne Parsons Leadership Program, participants will be able to:

- Apply their leadership skills and mindset to advance towards or take on an executive leadership role in an American orchestra
- Utilize emergent and responsive leadership skills in advancing critical issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the orchestra field
- Identify, analyze, and offer creative solutions to key strategic challenges in the evolving orchestra field
- Advance orchestras as diverse, inclusive, and innovative organizations, while fulfilling their unique role in the cultural context of their communities
- Thrive in an environment of evolving and competing imperatives as orchestras respond to the issues of our place and time and envision the future
- Be an active member of a growing inclusive network of peers, mentors, and resources for continued professional development

Program participation for June 2026 through June 2027 will include:

- June 1-3, 2026, League National Conference in Baltimore, MD
- Executive Leadership Training
- Bimonthly Cohort Meetings
- Bimonthly Conversations with Mentors
- Quarterly Leadership Forums
- Program and Self-Evaluations

Program participation is free. In addition, each participant will receive a travel stipend and free registration to the League's National Conference to convene and to contribute their insights to the national debate. Participants will benefit from networking opportunities supported by the mentors, and the whole cohort's profile will be promoted on a national level. Program participants will receive a one-year professional membership to the League of American Orchestras.

Participants are expected to commit to and participate in all sessions and associated events from June 2026 through June 2027. Partial participation is not permitted.

Mentoring and Faculty Team:

The 2026-27 mentoring and faculty team will be announced soon.

2025-26 Mentors:

- Jennifer Barlament, Executive Director, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra*
- Marie-Hélène Bernard, President & CEO, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra*
- Anna Kuwabara, Executive and Arts Education Consultant
- Kim Noltemy, President & CEO, Los Angeles Philharmonic Association*
- Melia Tourangeau, President & CEO, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra*
- Dr. Andrea F. Warren, President & CEO, Virginia Symphony Orchestra

* The Anne Parsons Leadership Program was conceived by the League in coordination with these founding mentors.

2025-26 Faculty:

- Astrid Baumgardner, President, Astrid Baumgardner Coaching + Training
- Afa S. Dworkin, President and Artistic Director, Sphinx Organization
- Katherine Goforth, Operatic Tenor
- Erika H. James, Dean of Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
- Gabriela Lena Frank, Composer and Pianist
- Sarah Willie-LeBreton, President, Smith College

League Staff:

- Caen Thomason-Redus, Vice President, Inclusion and Learning
- Heather Briere, Director, Learning and Leadership Programs

The Anne Parsons Leadership Program is made possible by generous support from Patricia A. Richards, with additional support provided by Colbert Artists Management and current and former orchestra executive directors and arts leaders nationwide.

Application Instructions

Apply Online

Application Deadline: Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 11:59pm Eastern

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In a highly competitive application process, six participants will be selected based on demonstrated experience, vision for the field, and a commitment to leading, serving, and building greater gender diversity in executive leadership roles in American orchestras. The program welcomes applications from individuals who have either 5 years of professional experience in the orchestra field or are currently in an executive leadership role in orchestras or comparable music organizations (including music festivals and arts organizations). All applicants, whether accepted to the Anne Parsons Leadership Program or not, will receive a one-year professional membership to the League of American Orchestras. The League especially invites applicants from backgrounds that have been historically underrepresented in the orchestral field.

Applicants must complete an online application with following requirements:

- **Applicant Information**

- Name
- Contact Information
- Current or most recent employer(s) (if applicable)
- Current or most recent job title(s) (if applicable)
- Your organization's total expense budget (if applicable)
- League program(s) you have previously applied to and/or participated in
- Names and emails for two references whom the League may contact regarding your application.

- **Application Materials**

Please upload the below materials with your application. Your resume should not include photos and should be in PDF format. Applications that exceed the stated page/word/duration limits will not be considered.

- Personal Written Statements (450-word maximum for each response, submitted via text boxes)
 - What are three important questions you have about the future of the orchestra field?
 - Name one opportunity and one challenge facing American orchestras (or if applicable, your orchestra in particular). Why are these important to you and to the field?

- Describe the type of leadership you believe orchestras need today and in the future.
- What do you think is necessary to increase the gender diversity of orchestral executive leadership and what role do you see yourself playing?
- Share a life experience or perspective that has affected who you are today and your desired impact on the orchestral field.
- What aspirations do you have for your orchestral leadership career, and how can this program advance your progress towards those goals?
- Resume (2 pages maximum, do not include photos, please submit in PDF format)
- Biography (250 words maximum, submitted via text box)
- **Pay the Non-Refundable \$65 Application Fee.** The cost for your first submission to one of our programs launching in 2026 is \$65. Each subsequent application to a second, third, or fourth program will be at no cost to you. You must use the following coupon code in order to negate the cost of your additional submissions: **02LEAGUE26.** (The first character is a zero.)
Please note if you pay for additional applications by accident, the fee is non-refundable.
- **Agree to the Acknowledgements**

Only fully complete applications will be considered. All submitted materials become the confidential property of the League of American Orchestras and will not be returned. Select candidates will be invited to participate in an online interview on February 24th or March 5th. All applicants will be notified by Thursday, April 2, 2026. Please note that the application fee is non-refundable. Program applicants will receive a one-year professional membership to the League of American Orchestras.

Questions

For questions about the Anne Parsons Leadership Program, please contact Heather Briere, Director of Learning and Leadership Programs, at hbriere@americanorchestras.org or 646 822 4019.

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