

A New Board Member's Guide to the Landscape of American Orchestras

December 8, 2025

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David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's webinar from the League of American Orchestras to provide a new board member's guide to the landscape of American orchestras. My name is David Styers, I'm the Director of Learning and Leadership Programs at the League, and I serve as the liaison to the orchestra board member constituency.

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00:01:07.070 --> 00:01:08.640

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: I also am a former

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00:01:08.680 --> 00:01:29.460

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: employee of BoardSource, the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, and so if you have any questions about your board, or board governance, or services that the League can provide to your board, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me at my email, dstyers@americanorchestras.org, or my phone, 646-322-4033.

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00:01:29.880 --> 00:01:47.200

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: It's a pleasure to welcome you again to today's webinar, and it is generously funded by a grant from the Howard Gilman Foundation, as well in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, with support from the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

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00:01:47.890 --> 00:02:06.860

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: For a few housekeeping issues, again, feel free to introduce yourself in the chat, and if you have any specific questions, feel free to put those in the Q&A box. You can also find the closed captioning or live transcript option through the icon in the Zoom toolbar.

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00:02:07.910 --> 00:02:19.809

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Also, everyone who's registered for today's webinar will receive an email with the recording, the slide deck, and the transcript, and the,

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00:02:20.000 --> 00:02:36.760

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: tab on our website that you see the QR code for under Related Resources gives you a list of different, features that the league has to offer, on our website, and resources for orchestra board members, so...

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00:02:36.760 --> 00:02:45.650

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: If you haven't checked out that Related Resources tab and our Noteboom Governance Center, please do so to find out more about all the benefits that we provide.

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David Styers, League of American Orchestras: And speaking of benefits, we hope that all orchestra board members are accessing

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David Styers, League of American Orchestras: a wealth of free benefits, again, on our website, [Americanorchestras.org](https://americanorchestras.org), and specifically our governance resources and orchestra field research. We also have some resources that are member-only on our website, which require you to

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00:03:08.620 --> 00:03:14.810

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: be signed up and logged in through your own personal account. And if you have any questions about your account.

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00:03:14.810 --> 00:03:34.269

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Feel free to contact me or our member at Americanorchestras.org email, and we'll be able to answer those questions. And also, if you don't already receive our latest articles and news email, please sign up for Symphony at www.symphony.org.

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00:03:34.270 --> 00:03:41.040

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: And if you go to that website, you'll see in the upper right-hand corner the sign-up button, and this is

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00:03:41.040 --> 00:03:53.079

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Free information that you and all your board members, staff, volunteers, musicians, anyone can sign up to get our e-newsletter with digests of important

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00:03:53.170 --> 00:04:03.470

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Issues happening on a daily basis within the orchestra field, articles that we, commission and write about major issues facing our...

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00:04:03.690 --> 00:04:19.739

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: orchestras, such as the Climate Commission's article that was just published November 21st, and so this is updated on practically a daily basis with news

briefs, and then every two weeks or so with a major feature story. So please take advantage of that information as well.

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00:04:21.110 --> 00:04:28.679

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Also, want to make sure that you will find on our website a benefits sheet. This is a two-pager that provides

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00:04:29.700 --> 00:04:35.610

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: A quick snapshot of all the different benefits that orchestra board members receive, again, with

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00:04:35.650 --> 00:04:44.010

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Contact information, for staff and, different links to materials that you can find.

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00:04:44.010 --> 00:04:58.410

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Again, here's the QR code to access that benefit sheet. Feel free to print it out, put it in your board manuals, share it at a board meeting, and just make sure that everyone knows that through your membership.

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00:04:58.460 --> 00:05:05.249

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: as an orchestra at the League of American Orchestras, that your orchestra board members have these benefits as well.

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00:05:07.390 --> 00:05:26.520

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Finally, I'm thrilled to introduce our hosts for today. We have joining us for this webinar, as an encore from when we first had it in February, and it was so successful, we decided to do it again here in December, and we have nearly 350 people registered

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00:05:26.520 --> 00:05:28.909

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: This time around as well, and so it's...

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David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Thrilling to have both Doug Hagerman, our immediate past chair of the board of the League of American Orchestras, and a former past chair of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, as well as the League's president and CEO, Simon Woods, who's also been a previous chief executive at the

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00:05:45.610 --> 00:05:54.799

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and both of them have a wealth of decades in the orchestra field, on

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00:05:54.930 --> 00:06:05.890

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: both the executive side and on the governance side. And so, for our agenda today, we'll start with Simon giving sort of an overview of the

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00:06:06.040 --> 00:06:14.839

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: the orchestra field, And then Doug will, talk about some of the particular issues of

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00:06:15.000 --> 00:06:28.110

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: governance in orchestras, and then Simon will tell you a little bit more about the league, and again, some of the trends and issues that we're seeing. And then, finally, we'll end with some Q&A, so we have

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00:06:28.110 --> 00:06:44.739

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: about 45 minutes or so of presentation, then we'll be happy to answer questions, and if we need to run past the top of the next hour, we certainly can do that, but I will turn it over now to Simon, and please put your questions in the Q&A. Thank you so much, Simon and Doug, for being with us today.

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Simon Woods: Thank you very much, David. It's great to see everybody. We did this, as David said, for the first time last year, and we had a fantastic response to it, and we're glad to be able to provide this service. It's something that we've been talking about for a few years, and finally last year we got around to implementing it.

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Simon Woods: And it's just great to see so many people on this call, and we hope we're going to provide you with some interesting information about what's going on in the field, a little bit of context.

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00:07:14.680 --> 00:07:28.589

Simon Woods: And Doug's going to talk about, as David said, about governance, and I'm going to start off with just a little bit of an update on what is going on around the field with some data that you might find interesting. So...

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Simon Woods: Let's just start.

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Simon Woods: start by just kind of grounding ourselves in who orchestras are. There are...

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00:07:38.770 --> 00:07:55.319

Simon Woods: more than 2,000 professional, community, and youth orchestras in the US, in all 50 states and in communities of all sizes. And the reason I think this is important for us just to be reminded about is just the sheer scale of this field.

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00:07:55.320 --> 00:08:05.690

Simon Woods: And, you know, as you're talking to people in your community, it's worth being reminded that you're part of a really, really big national community

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00:08:05.690 --> 00:08:17.430

Simon Woods: Of orchestras. It's a very widespread art form, and our art form, particularly, is one of the largest of all of the kind of so-called

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00:08:17.430 --> 00:08:33.210

Simon Woods: you know, traditional legacy art forms. And there really are orchestras everywhere in this country, so it's a big, and it's a vibrant community. And it's also a community that, as you will find out if you're a new board member.

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00:08:33.530 --> 00:08:51.700

Simon Woods: It's a community that is incredibly collaborative. People are always happy to share information, they're always happy to support you, you know, across states, and within states, and within cities. So this is your field, to be a part of.

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Simon Woods: So, this information comes from a document that we produce every couple of years that we're in the middle of producing an update for right now.

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Simon Woods: And it sort of just reminds us of some of the key aspects of orchestras. Orchestras are a vital part of America's musical landscape. 26,000 performances

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00:09:15.750 --> 00:09:26.370

Simon Woods: Over the course of a year, of which more than a quarter are completely free. And so, when we get people talking to us about how orchestras are,

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00:09:26.530 --> 00:09:39.729

Simon Woods: you know, an elitist art form, it's useful to be reminded of that. And it's also to be useful to be reminded of the impact that orchestras have in their communities, in terms of employment of creative workforce, and...

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00:09:39.820 --> 00:09:58.229

Simon Woods: and the financial health of communities. Orchestras make a tremendous contribution to every community they're in. They contribute to tourism, to, to, residency, they contribute to, obviously, to restaurants and hotels.

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00:09:58.280 --> 00:10:13.530

Simon Woods: They have an immense economic footprint, and they're often, in many communities, the largest arts organization in that community, and so they're a very, very significant economic driver, as well as a driver of community health and inspiration, as we know.

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00:10:14.080 --> 00:10:24.680

Simon Woods: And that really is the next point here. Orchestras contribute to the creative, civic, and educational vitality of communities. When we think about how we talk about orchestra.

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00:10:26.950 --> 00:10:39.719

Simon Woods: It's so important to remember this fact, that orchestras are embedded in their community, and they're providing inspiration to young people, and they're providing inspiration to communities.

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00:10:39.720 --> 00:10:58.960

Simon Woods: Every time any of us sees an orchestra imaged in a Hollywood movie or a TV show, you know, the traditional stereotype is, you know, the audience is in tuxes and, you know, everything looks like a gala, right?

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00:10:58.960 --> 00:11:17.249

Simon Woods: And we know that that is so very far from the truth, so as you encounter those stereotypes in your community, let's all of you can help to, remind everybody of this impact. And this last point here, charitable contributions. You know, we have a huge, broad base of,

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00:11:17.250 --> 00:11:21.599

Simon Woods: of donors to orchestras. So, 72% of charitable gifts to orchestras.

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00:11:21.600 --> 00:11:28.110

Simon Woods: from the general public, we're under \$250. Again, you know, a reminder of just what a reach we have.

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00:11:28.730 --> 00:11:37.379

Simon Woods: Okay, so, these are just a few things to remember. Orchestras of all shapes and sizes, everything from 52-week salaried musicians.

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00:11:37.620 --> 00:11:40.840

Simon Woods: To per service, to entirely volunteer.

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00:11:41.310 --> 00:11:53.429

Simon Woods: Classical pop special in education, a vast variety of relationships with their venues. Some orchestras own them, some manage them, some lease them per concert.

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00:11:53.580 --> 00:11:59.559

Simon Woods: Very many different models there. No two orchestras are exactly the same in that regard.

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00:11:59.670 --> 00:12:15.880

Simon Woods: The AFM, the union is the union of record for most orchestras, but not all, and when you're going into smaller orchestras, you find more and more orchestras where the musicians are not members of the AFM.

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00:12:16.240 --> 00:12:31.290

Simon Woods: And we have everything from the, you know, the staff size with a, you know, single executive director, right up to the enormous staffs of the Boston Symphony and the LA Phil, and that's also reflected here in those budget numbers.

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00:12:31.540 --> 00:12:46.439

Simon Woods: Urban, suburban, rural, all 50 states. And then the last point here is just about music directors. You know, there are many orchestras who have music directors who live in their community and is an employee and is a part...

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00:12:46.440 --> 00:12:58.549

Simon Woods: conducts every concert, and there's a fixture in, you know, in the community's life. And then in the large orchestras, you have music directors who conduct less than a third of concerts and visit a few times a year.

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00:12:58.940 --> 00:13:04.259

Simon Woods: We always want to emphasize to people a vast range of different experiences.

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00:13:04.550 --> 00:13:06.580

Simon Woods: What an orchestra actually looks like.

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Simon Woods: In terms of the orchestras who are members of the league, we have about almost 500 adult orchestras, and a big and very vibrant youth orchestra community.

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00:13:18.060 --> 00:13:33.929

Simon Woods: And then we have a kind of certain number of, of smaller, constituents. It's international orchestras and many business partners who help to underwrite our business, work through their sponsorships, and their presentations that they do at concerts, at conferences.

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00:13:34.140 --> 00:13:46.079

Simon Woods: And then we have some individuals who are members, and most of the individuals, and some of you may be individuals, most of the individuals are members in order to get access to the, to the jobs, and to the job ads.

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00:13:46.080 --> 00:13:56.260

Simon Woods: Which is something that you only get access to if you're an individual member. So, some people are members through their orchestra, and then they're individual members in addition to that.

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00:13:57.770 --> 00:14:05.369

Simon Woods: This is just how we break down orchestras at the, at the league, so the largest group are the, are the,

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00:14:05.390 --> 00:14:18.279

Simon Woods: or orchestras with budgets above 20 million, and you'll hear us regularly talking about Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and so on. And this is how we organize them for discussions.

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00:14:18.450 --> 00:14:28.330

Simon Woods: discussion groups, and for a lot of the other work that happens, we think about them in this way. And, you know, the way that, let's say, Group 7 and 8 orchestras

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00:14:28.330 --> 00:14:38.839

Simon Woods: you know, operate, and the way that Group 3, 4 orchestras, so medium-sized orchestras operate, and the way that very large orchestras operate. Of course, there are communalities, but they're very, very different.

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00:14:38.840 --> 00:14:40.290

Simon Woods: kinds of business.

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00:14:40.480 --> 00:14:58.149

Simon Woods: And this is how it divides up; how many orchestras there are in each category. And there's one thing here which is particularly the reason I put this slide up for one particular reason, which is to note that the majority of orchestras in this country are the smaller orchestras.

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00:14:58.200 --> 00:15:03.589

Simon Woods: Of course, the largest orchestras are, you know, the ones we hear about, you know.

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00:15:03.800 --> 00:15:18.289

Simon Woods: regularly, the ones who make the national press, you know, on a regular basis, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, LA, San Francisco, and so on. But we have to be reminded that a huge proportion of our constituency is

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00:15:18.460 --> 00:15:27.719

Simon Woods: Orchestras, you know, community-based orchestras and small orchestras, you know, based in states, sometimes in rural areas.

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00:15:28.350 --> 00:15:36.449

Simon Woods: So, that's really the kind of quick overview, and Doug, I'm going to hand it back to you now to talk a little bit about governance.

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00:15:37.180 --> 00:15:38.669

Doug Hagerman: Great, thank you, Simon.

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00:15:38.670 --> 00:15:39.290

Simon Woods: Denver?

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00:15:39.660 --> 00:15:47.749

Doug Hagerman: So, if you go to the first slide, I thought I would start, for those of you who have been on another board.

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00:15:47.830 --> 00:16:00.129

Doug Hagerman: I thought I'd start with how orchestra boards might be a little bit different than the experience you've had in other types of boards. We have typically 3 leaders.

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00:16:00.340 --> 00:16:10.749

Doug Hagerman: an administrative leader, a volunteer board leader, and an artistic leader or music director. And making the

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00:16:10.800 --> 00:16:22.170

Doug Hagerman: Three-headed leadership model work is an inherent challenge, and but we have good reasons for that leadership model, and it's served us well, but it has to be managed.

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00:16:22.170 --> 00:16:31.829

Doug Hagerman: And everyone has to get along, and everyone has to play nice. Number two, there are variations in reporting lines among those, leaders.

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00:16:31.830 --> 00:16:43.179

Doug Hagerman: And we'll talk a little bit about that later. Orchestras typically have musician representatives involved in governance.

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00:16:43.180 --> 00:16:52.489

Doug Hagerman: Yeah, they are the talent, so to speak. They're also typically employees of the organization, certainly in larger organizations.

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00:16:52.620 --> 00:16:58.769

Doug Hagerman: But they also are involved in governance and serve on boards and board committees.

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00:16:59.330 --> 00:17:05.169

Doug Hagerman: So there'll also be some unique committees in, in orchestras, some

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00:17:05.319 --> 00:17:12.309

Doug Hagerman: Some orchestras have EDI committees, community engagement committees, artistic direction committees, and the like.

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00:17:12.540 --> 00:17:17.700

Doug Hagerman: There is, sometimes a lack of cl...

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00:17:18.150 --> 00:17:20.000

Doug Hagerman: What's the role of the board?

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00:17:20.109 --> 00:17:25.340

Doug Hagerman: As it relates to artistic matters, and those of you who got on this board thinking you could tell the

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00:17:25.550 --> 00:17:42.779

Doug Hagerman: orchestra that they should play Brahms instead of Tchaikovsky are probably mistaken, because that's probably not your role as a board member, but you need to be in tune with the artistic, direction of the organization and supportive of it, and in some ways, kind of...

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00:17:42.930 --> 00:17:47.780

Doug Hagerman: That doesn't mean any kind of detailed involvement in artistic matters.

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00:17:48.040 --> 00:17:49.009

Doug Hagerman: We have a...

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00:17:49.380 --> 00:18:01.339

Doug Hagerman: model in our field. There are many, many orchestras that have structural deficits, and that depend on heroic philanthropy, big one-time gifts, and the like.

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00:18:01.370 --> 00:18:15.980

Doug Hagerman: And if we could change one thing about our field, it would be to properly capitalize it. So we struggle with, sometimes, weak balance sheets, even where we're operating in the black.

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00:18:16.270 --> 00:18:34.380

Doug Hagerman: Equity, diversity, and inclusion is an imperative for our field. The field has an image problem, about who orchestral music is quote-unquote for, and as organizations that want to serve our whole communities and

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00:18:35.170 --> 00:18:38.090

Doug Hagerman: Optimize our appeal

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00:18:38.250 --> 00:18:49.550

Doug Hagerman: for leaders in our communities and donors and so forth who want us to support the whole community. It's really critical that we be working

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00:18:49.560 --> 00:18:58.260

Doug Hagerman: how to maximize the reach of our organizations within our communities. And that's the thrust of our EDI work.

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00:18:58.310 --> 00:19:01.849

Doug Hagerman: And again, we do fight elitism.

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00:19:01.930 --> 00:19:20.440

Doug Hagerman: We have unique processes, typically tied up in collective bargaining agreements about how leaders are chosen. This is not the corporate world in terms of how that all happens, and so if you're new board members, you probably don't need to worry about that your first year, but someday you should be

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00:19:20.440 --> 00:19:28.219

Doug Hagerman: Really get your head around the leadership selection processes and succession planning processes in your orchestra.

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00:19:28.250 --> 00:19:37.380

Doug Hagerman: And finally, you know, this is probably obvious, we, we need to have constructive relationships with musicians,

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00:19:37.430 --> 00:19:47.359

Doug Hagerman: For instance, as it relates to leadership, because they are a critical constituency for the success of the organization, for obvious reasons.

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00:19:47.600 --> 00:19:50.300

Doug Hagerman: Okay, let's go on to the next slide.

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00:19:50.890 --> 00:19:54.260

Doug Hagerman: So I typically talk,

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00:19:54.670 --> 00:20:07.160

Doug Hagerman: Oops, wrong way. Yeah, so we refer to constituencies, but I thought I'd just kind of list them a little bit here. And if you're involved in governance of the organization, one way to define governance is kind of

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00:20:07.160 --> 00:20:16.250

Doug Hagerman: The set of rules and norms and expectations and laws and principles that relate to the interrelations between constituencies.

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00:20:16.300 --> 00:20:35.329

Doug Hagerman: who decides things, and who gets consulted about things, and so forth. And all those constituencies are important. If you're a leader of your organization, you need to worry about all those constituencies, and whether they're engaged, and whether they're optimal, contributing to the organization.

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00:20:35.710 --> 00:20:36.600

Doug Hagerman: Now...

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00:20:36.750 --> 00:20:50.529

Doug Hagerman: When you were elected to your orchestra board, you were elected under a set of rules that come from two sources. The statutes in the state in which your orchestra is organized.

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00:20:50.650 --> 00:20:53.259

Doug Hagerman: And the bylaws of your organization.

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00:20:53.430 --> 00:20:57.939

Doug Hagerman: Those are where most of our governance rules come from.

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00:20:58.130 --> 00:21:10.530

Doug Hagerman: And so, as you pursue the governance of your organization, you need to be mindful of the requirements of those two sources. Okay, let's go on to the next slide.

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00:21:10.690 --> 00:21:15.120

Doug Hagerman: So, I like to review with people

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00:21:15.230 --> 00:21:18.940

Doug Hagerman: a little bit more about the orchestra leadership model.

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00:21:19.380 --> 00:21:20.260

Doug Hagerman: So...

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00:21:20.700 --> 00:21:40.660

Doug Hagerman: In most situations, the CEO reports to the board slash board chair, and is, hired and fired pursuant to, procedures that can be defined by the board, but also typically are shaped by the collective bargaining agreement.

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00:21:40.770 --> 00:21:43.710

Doug Hagerman: When I did,

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00:21:43.940 --> 00:21:46.170

Doug Hagerman: a CEO search at my...

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00:21:46.310 --> 00:21:49.679

Doug Hagerman: musicians involved in it, and I think that's the norm.

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00:21:49.890 --> 00:22:08.880

Doug Hagerman: The music director reporting relationship can be different. Sometimes the music director reports to the board chair, sometimes to the CEO. There are reasonable minds that can disagree about this. I'm someone who advocates having the music director report to the CEO, but both models can work.

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00:22:08.900 --> 00:22:20.980

Doug Hagerman: And it's safe to say that the older your music director is, and the more European your music director is, the more he or she will expect to report to the board chair. So that's an issue to be managed.

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00:22:21.030 --> 00:22:29.449

Doug Hagerman: The, As I said before, the board chair, while these reporting relationships ultimately

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00:22:29.690 --> 00:22:42.510

Doug Hagerman: feed up to the board chair. The board chair does not have sole power over these leadership decisions. It's a shared decision with other board members, staff, musicians, and so forth.

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00:22:42.890 --> 00:22:57.239

Doug Hagerman: And having collaborative relationships, where everyone knows what their role is, and everyone supports each other, acts as thought partners together in solving problems, the better this is going to work.

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00:22:57.310 --> 00:23:12.189

Doug Hagerman: And you might ask whether everyone has a job description in your organization. Sometimes the music director job descriptions are non-existent or pretty thin, and it raises the question.

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00:23:12.220 --> 00:23:26.540

Doug Hagerman: Is the music director responsible for anything other than great concerts? Is the music director responsible for the whole mission of the organization? So that's the kind of thing you'd get at in fleshing out a job description.

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00:23:26.710 --> 00:23:38.170

Doug Hagerman: And finally, I just want to emphasize that the board should represent the community in its dealings with the other constituencies. Take an external vantage point.

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00:23:38.430 --> 00:23:56.909

Doug Hagerman: Put your community hat on when you walk into board meetings, not your, whatever your latest issue is that you've been working with in your organization. See this organization from the perspective of the community. Okay, next slide.

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00:23:57.510 --> 00:24:02.690

Doug Hagerman: So, this is the, what I call the stay-in-your-lane slide.

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00:24:03.020 --> 00:24:17.030

Doug Hagerman: The, particularly the bottom half of this slide, the board doesn't run the organization, it doesn't execute plans, it doesn't hire and fire people, it doesn't,

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00:24:17.110 --> 00:24:24.389

Doug Hagerman: You know, make the spending decisions that cause the budget

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00:24:24.560 --> 00:24:39.220

Doug Hagerman: To be balanced or not, but the board does set the budget, and the board does set the policies, and the board does oversee all of this, and has responsibility for, seeing the big picture, approving strategies.

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00:24:40.130 --> 00:24:51.760

Doug Hagerman: And asking strategic questions. And there are two failure modes here, really, I have to emphasize this. There are some boards that are too hands-off, and there are some boards that are too hands-on.

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00:24:51.800 --> 00:25:04.790

Doug Hagerman: And this is a matter of getting it just right. You want to be active in your oversight and active in your support, but not active in telling people what to do or how to do their jobs, because you have professionals who are hired for that.

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00:25:05.240 --> 00:25:08.369

Doug Hagerman: And just to touch lightly on the top half of the slide.

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00:25:08.490 --> 00:25:18.059

Doug Hagerman: My favorite way of thinking about the board's role is that you're really taking community investment and translating it into public value.

139

00:25:18.310 --> 00:25:31.430

Doug Hagerman: Because we all have a big investment of philanthropic dollars from our community, and it needs to be translated into value for the whole community, in a public sense. Okay, next slide.

140

00:25:32.280 --> 00:25:41.249

Doug Hagerman: So, think about what your responsibilities as a board member are. And I have two,

141

00:25:41.630 --> 00:25:50.120

Doug Hagerman: two slides on this. The first is the set of collective responsibilities that the board has as a whole, and

142

00:25:50.450 --> 00:25:57.969

Doug Hagerman: I think it's important for us to get our head around this, right? So we shape, the vision and mission.

143

00:25:58.210 --> 00:26:03.949

Doug Hagerman: We set strategy and make sure that planning is happening the way it should.

144

00:26:04.260 --> 00:26:13.629

Doug Hagerman: We select the CEO and the music director and support them and evaluate them. We monitor how the organization's performing.

145

00:26:13.940 --> 00:26:21.460

Doug Hagerman: We ensure that resources are adequate through networking and fundraising and other means of support.

146

00:26:21.720 --> 00:26:31.319

Doug Hagerman: We protect assets and do kind of our fiduciary responsibility as it relates to financial oversights and legal and ethical integrity.

147

00:26:31.400 --> 00:26:47.940

Doug Hagerman: We build our board and bring new people into the fold to be future board members, and we try to enhance the board's public standing. So these are all things that your board should be doing collectively, and that every board member shares in

148

00:26:47.940 --> 00:26:57.699

Doug Hagerman: responsibility for. The next slide is the individual responsibilities of board members, and I hope that in most cases.

149

00:26:57.750 --> 00:27:11.569

Doug Hagerman: Before you signed on to join your orchestra's board, someone reviewed with you what your responsibilities were. It might have been written, it might have been verbal, hopefully it was discussed, because it's very important

150

00:27:11.570 --> 00:27:20.019

Doug Hagerman: That we all sign up for these significant responsibilities. Beyond an orchestra board isn't a lightweight duty.

151

00:27:20.040 --> 00:27:22.339

Doug Hagerman: It isn't something you can do

152

00:27:22.710 --> 00:27:31.239

Doug Hagerman: every now and then, it's a serious responsibility, and so we all have to do all the things listed on here.

153

00:27:31.610 --> 00:27:40.300

Doug Hagerman: Fundraising in whatever way is appropriate for you, making a personal gift, attending.

154

00:27:40.550 --> 00:27:47.389

Doug Hagerman: Keeping up to date about how the organization's doing financially, and so on.

155

00:27:47.400 --> 00:28:04.670

Doug Hagerman: you can see it all listed on the slide. We don't need to talk about each one, but I hope all of you will accept your responsibility to do all of these things as orchestra board members. And if there's no clarity.

156

00:28:04.670 --> 00:28:14.249

Doug Hagerman: within your organization on this, you might bring that up with your board chair. You know, say, hey, maybe we ought to get this clarified, because

157

00:28:14.770 --> 00:28:33.110

Doug Hagerman: I didn't know what I signed up for here, or some people think they have responsibilities and others don't. So, it can be a fruitful topic and make sure everyone's on the same page of what we're contributing to the organization. Okay, next slide.

158

00:28:33.240 --> 00:28:46.809

Doug Hagerman: We're getting toward the end here, but I want to talk about how we build a board. You know, you're all hopefully going to,

159

00:28:47.040 --> 00:28:48.370

Doug Hagerman: have...

160

00:28:48.660 --> 00:29:00.519

Doug Hagerman: the opportunity to suggest people to the nominating and governance committee of your organization. Hopefully, you will look beyond your existing network.

161

00:29:01.700 --> 00:29:21.639

Doug Hagerman: Hopefully, your orchestra, is reaching, through various networks, whether it's, neighborhood, government, corporate community, etc., to find new people who aren't already in the in-crowd, in the symphony, to go on the board.

162

00:29:21.690 --> 00:29:27.119

Doug Hagerman: But everyone we recruit, of course, needs to have a passion for this music.

163

00:29:27.140 --> 00:29:42.410

Doug Hagerman: needs to be familiar with how to do non-profit governance, needs to be willing to support the organization in various ways. And, you know, from time to time, we're looking for specific skills.

164

00:29:42.500 --> 00:29:48.059

Doug Hagerman: We might need a technology person, or a finance person, or whatever the case may be.

165

00:29:48.300 --> 00:29:49.830

Doug Hagerman: And so we...

166

00:29:49.910 --> 00:29:59.180

Doug Hagerman: We have self-perpetuating boards, but part of our job is to always looking for new, new names. And just a footnote on that.

167

00:29:59.180 --> 00:30:14.190

Doug Hagerman: You don't have to vet a candidate before you bring them forward to your governance committee. One of the ways that things go wrong is when people say, oh, I've got an

idea, and they go and ask the person if they want to be on the board before they've discussed that with the governance committee.

168

00:30:14.220 --> 00:30:21.269

Doug Hagerman: You want to go to the governance committee before you ask any questions like that of the potential recruit.

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00:30:21.890 --> 00:30:23.869

Doug Hagerman: Okay, next slide.

170

00:30:25.470 --> 00:30:27.139

Doug Hagerman: So the,

171

00:30:29.070 --> 00:30:37.229

Doug Hagerman: sort of the last conceptual thing that I want to talk about on governance is this notion of how the board operates in different modes.

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00:30:37.490 --> 00:30:45.560

Doug Hagerman: At any given board meeting, hopefully you will find your board operating in each of these three modes at some point in the meeting.

173

00:30:45.840 --> 00:31:02.510

Doug Hagerman: So the fiduciary stuff tends to be what we think of as regular business, financial updates, audit reports, and the like, election of new members, following the rules and the bylaws for everything we do.

174

00:31:02.760 --> 00:31:12.880

Doug Hagerman: If that work overwhelms the time that, people spend Board meetings, then...

175

00:31:13.010 --> 00:31:23.049

Doug Hagerman: you probably have the wrong balance because you need to make time for strategic and generative work. Strategic is, of course, planning. It's...

176

00:31:23.230 --> 00:31:26.600

Doug Hagerman: Talking about the future, setting priorities.

177

00:31:26.690 --> 00:31:45.199

Doug Hagerman: dedicating resources to specific things, and generative is really, blue-sky thinking. How do we respond to the trends and challenges that we face? What's coming around the corner at us that we need to anticipate and get ready for?

178

00:31:45.290 --> 00:31:51.819

Doug Hagerman: You know, that could be relatively common questions like.

179

00:31:52.220 --> 00:31:55.850

Doug Hagerman: you know, is our audience aging, right? Which is a...

180

00:31:56.010 --> 00:32:08.659

Doug Hagerman: age-old question. You know, people said that orchestra audiences were aging 40 years ago, and they're still aging, but here we are, and we're still going strong. But, in any event, thinking about those big

181

00:32:09.590 --> 00:32:25.379

Doug Hagerman: issues of how we serve our community and what our purpose is are generative. And if your board leaders can find a way to make time for strategic and generative topics at every board meeting, that's for the best.

182

00:32:25.620 --> 00:32:27.550

Doug Hagerman: Okay, next slide.

183

00:32:27.880 --> 00:32:44.410

Doug Hagerman: So the last thing I want to cover before I hand it over to Simon is, you know, we're in a point in time where the whole concept of equity, diversity, and inclusion is being challenged, it's being caricatured, it's being...

184

00:32:44.420 --> 00:33:02.599

Doug Hagerman: portrayed as an obstacle of meritocracy and all sorts of other things. But there are really, really good reasons why proper equity, diversity, and inclusion work is important for orchestras. And here are some of the reasons that the league has

185

00:33:02.770 --> 00:33:19.610

Doug Hagerman: focused on in kind of trying to help orchestras discuss this and make the case for why we're doing this in an era when some people just, you know, think there's something wrong with equity, diversity, and inclusion, but here's why we're doing it.

186

00:33:19.750 --> 00:33:28.220

Doug Hagerman: In the end, we're an art form. It enriches our musical performance to have all voices heard in the concert hall.

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00:33:28.410 --> 00:33:37.389

Doug Hagerman: The long-term sustainability of our orchestras depend upon us reaching and being valued by the entire community.

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00:33:37.910 --> 00:33:42.860

Doug Hagerman: It's crucial that we have access to the best talent.

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00:33:43.070 --> 00:33:53.469

Doug Hagerman: And that no superstar violinist, oboist, or trumpet player drops off the pipeline because they didn't get a shot.

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00:33:54.030 --> 00:33:55.669

Doug Hagerman: Everyone should have a shot.

191

00:33:56.140 --> 00:34:06.060

Doug Hagerman: It's central to our creativity, our sense of innovation and collaboration. And finally because our communities are diverse.

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00:34:06.060 --> 00:34:18.929

Doug Hagerman: it's important that our most important musical organizations also be diverse. So this is how we articulate the case for this, and

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00:34:19.080 --> 00:34:33.859

Doug Hagerman: we don't intend to have a debate about that today, but we thought it would be useful for you to hear why this is a part of what we're, what we're moving forward with. And with that, back to you, Simon.

194

00:34:37.659 --> 00:34:39.009

Simon Woods: Thank you very much, Doug.

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00:34:39.889 --> 00:34:42.149

Simon Woods: So, what we're going to do now...

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00:34:42.409 --> 00:34:49.739

Simon Woods: Is go on to, a question that always concerns boards, which is what's going on in the field.

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00:34:49.969 --> 00:34:51.629

Simon Woods: And,

198

00:34:51.729 --> 00:35:11.459

Simon Woods: I'm going to speak in a minute about the work that the League does in terms of supporting boards and supporting orchestras, but this is the way that we share data and we monitor trends is a very, very important part of our kind of value we provide to the field.

199

00:35:11.559 --> 00:35:26.879

Simon Woods: So I'm just going to take you through a, a few kinds of different aspects of that, in the next few slides. And this is fairly hot off the press. A lot of this data comes from

200

00:35:27.339 --> 00:35:32.159

Simon Woods: a project that we have with TRG, which is a major arts consultancy.

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00:35:32.239 --> 00:35:51.629

Simon Woods: And it's based on a benchmark group. So, we have about 55 orchestras at last count in this benchmark group, who supply us with data directly through their sales and their customer relationship management systems. So it's very bona fide data.

202

00:35:51.659 --> 00:36:10.729

Simon Woods: Excuse me, it's very bona fide data. But the thing I always say about it is, it's not a total field picture. It is guidance only. We have other ways of getting at bigger trends in the field, which comes from our big report that we do every year called the Orchestra Statistical Report.

203

00:36:10.729 --> 00:36:14.679

Simon Woods: Which, if you don't know about that yet, will you hear about that in due course.

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00:36:14.709 --> 00:36:19.999

Simon Woods: But this is based on a benchmark group. In other words, it doesn't...

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00:36:20.299 --> 00:36:30.259

Simon Woods: reflect the totality of the picture, but it's a guidance document, and I would always emphasize every orchestra will have its own experience.

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00:36:30.369 --> 00:36:39.639

Simon Woods: So let's start on what the benchmark group is telling us about orchestra audiences. And there is some good news here.

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00:36:39.869 --> 00:36:46.229

Simon Woods: And the headline news is that orchestras are still really doing,

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00:36:47.329 --> 00:37:03.289

Simon Woods: fairly well relative to the other major performing arts. Ticket sales are up since 22-23, which was the snapshot moment that we've taken right after the pandemic, and revenue's up 23%. Now.

209

00:37:03.919 --> 00:37:16.069

Simon Woods: when I talk about the overall finances, of course, you know, you'll remember that that is in the context of significant inflation in this period, so it's not quite as good news as it appears, but nonetheless,

210

00:37:16.069 --> 00:37:34.889

Simon Woods: you know, it's by no means a sky is falling situation, so if people tell you, well, orchestra sales are falling, well, our benchmark group doesn't really tell us that right now. If you take a look at a longer period of time, let's say 20 years, then it's a different picture. But right now, post-pandemic, it's fairly encouraging.

211

00:37:35.499 --> 00:37:55.309

Simon Woods: There's a lot of new ticket buyers in the mix here. So, total number of custom households growing between 22, 23 and 24, 25. A lot of that actually is due to, I will say, kind of special concerts. A lot of movies with orchestra, a lot of special pops concerts with big-name guests.

212

00:37:55.309 --> 00:38:11.759

Simon Woods: And orchestra's really diversifying their product range. So, I think the caveat sort of buried in that thing about new ticket buyers is that it may not necessarily be true to say that there are a lot of new ticket buyers coming to pure classical.

213

00:38:12.069 --> 00:38:25.429

Simon Woods: We know that orchestras in general are generating new audiences, but the question about pure classical is a slightly different one, which is why orchestras are kind of thinking about the balance in different ways to match their communities.

214

00:38:26.319 --> 00:38:30.159

Simon Woods: Single ticket sales are continuing to grow this season.

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00:38:30.369 --> 00:38:35.849

Simon Woods: which I think also reflects the kind of diversification of the product lines that I mentioned.

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00:38:35.899 --> 00:38:52.979

Simon Woods: But the really interesting thing here is that subscription and membership sales strengthened during the same period, with volume increasing by 4%, and revenue rising 11%. And again, this is one of those things that, you know, we hear a lot, you know, which is that subscriptions are dead. Well, they're not really.

217

00:38:53.189 --> 00:39:06.599

Simon Woods: They are continuing to hold their own. And, not only that, but there is a new trend going on right now within orchestras, which some of your orchestras may already be on top of and may be working.

218

00:39:06.599 --> 00:39:19.539

Simon Woods: which is this idea of memberships. So the membership model is the idea that a member of the public can, can, pay,

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00:39:19.609 --> 00:39:35.309

Simon Woods: pick a number. \$50 a month, and for that, they get the opportunity to go to a certain number of performances in that month. And the great thing about this is it's a 12-month renewal, so it's like your Netflix subscription, it's like your, you know, your Apple subscription, or whatever you have.

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00:39:35.429 --> 00:39:54.089

Simon Woods: And so once you lock in people, and you lock them into automatic repeating membership, you can keep them. This is a big trend. It's currently more, I would say, in smaller and medium-sized orchestras than it is in large ones, but it's definitely a growth area.

221

00:39:55.129 --> 00:40:10.569

Simon Woods: So let's look at, so this picture then, let's say, you know, it's by no means all bad news. In fact, there's some quite encouraging information in here, although we know that there are some challenges in particular communities, but there's some encouraging stuff there.

222

00:40:10.689 --> 00:40:16.839

Simon Woods: As we look at fundraising, there's slightly more concern here, I would say. Yes.

223

00:40:17.219 --> 00:40:28.829

Simon Woods: there is a broadening base of support. Orchestras are getting more gifts at a smaller level, at a smaller dollar level from more people. This is a great indication of the breadth of the base.

224

00:40:29.469 --> 00:40:34.129

Simon Woods: But they are losing major gifts. They're losing gifts at the high end.

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00:40:34.549 --> 00:40:51.439

Simon Woods: And there is particularly this very significant exposure, with all orchestras of every level being very reliant on large gifts,

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00:40:51.539 --> 00:41:03.279

Simon Woods: A small number of large gifts, which is a lot of exposure, and as those donors are either passing away or not coming to concerts anymore, there's risk there.

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00:41:03.379 --> 00:41:13.459

Simon Woods: And right now, the upward trend in individual giving is not being compensated for by.

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00:41:13.539 --> 00:41:27.239

Simon Woods: by the loss of the high-end donors. So something we've really got to pay attention to. And when we think of what this tells us, kind of big picture, it tells us that the messaging to our communities about our community value

229

00:41:27.239 --> 00:41:47.189

Simon Woods: The messaging about the impact that orchestras have on young people, on communities, on civic financial health. Those broader factors beyond the music, are continuing to be an absolutely vital messaging point for orchestras to continue to broaden the fundraising base.

230

00:41:48.139 --> 00:41:58.339

Simon Woods: This is, a snapshot of, finances, and, you know, you'll get the slides after, and I'm not going to go down this, because I think it's,

231

00:41:58.649 --> 00:42:12.219

Simon Woods: It's fairly self-explanatory, but as you look at your own orchestra's financials, you can look back at this slide and compare yourselves to the benchmark group.

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00:42:12.409 --> 00:42:14.259

Simon Woods: And...

233

00:42:14.429 --> 00:42:24.259

Simon Woods: You know, people always look at liquidity, actually, 26 weeks, you know, 6 months of liquidity, average weeks of expense and liquidity across the whole sector, it's actually not as bad.

234

00:42:24.299 --> 00:42:39.329

Simon Woods: As one might expect, given that we know we have challenges in the business model, and we know we have capitalization problems, but most orchestras do appear to have 6 months of, of liquidity. So.

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00:42:39.409 --> 00:42:41.849

Simon Woods: You can peruse that at your leisure.

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00:42:43.669 --> 00:42:53.129

Simon Woods: Doug was talking about equity, diversity, inclusion, and, again, this is another slide that I'm not going to go down in detail, but I will just point out here

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00:42:53.289 --> 00:42:58.939

Simon Woods: that our field has significantly changed over the last decade.

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00:42:59.109 --> 00:43:14.009

Simon Woods: It has become significantly more diverse, that applies in gender, particularly in terms of whose music is being played and who is standing on a podium.

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00:43:14.899 --> 00:43:23.649

Simon Woods: And there is a slow increase in board diversity.

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00:43:23.739 --> 00:43:42.129

Simon Woods: But the thing for us to note about is, and boards, is that orchestra boards are still less diverse than non-profit organizations in general, and women are still under representative. This is a very, very important point, because it just goes to remind us, you know, just like Doug said a few minutes ago.

241

00:43:42.209 --> 00:43:55.649

Simon Woods: that thinking intentionally about community representation. If you want to attract donations from your community, you have to represent the community, and this is just a reminder that we're making progress, but we've still got a long way to go there.

242

00:43:56.709 --> 00:44:15.019

Simon Woods: Again, I'll leave you to look at that at your leisure. So here are the big themes in the field that are being discussed right now. We try to reflect on these themes all the time. They're reflected in our strategic plan. Actually, we're just working on a renewal of that for the period 26 through 29 right now.

243

00:44:15.049 --> 00:44:32.959

Simon Woods: And most of these themes will show up. Relevance, the R word, are so important, and it drives everything. The breadth of audiences, demographics, building community connections, it's so incredibly central, and just about every orchestra in every size community is thinking about it, and of course.

244

00:44:32.959 --> 00:44:38.109

Simon Woods: You know, in a sense, as everybody who's come from the corporate world knows.

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00:44:38.109 --> 00:44:51.819

Simon Woods: You can't divorce marketing from product development, and so this idea of what we are putting on our stages, how creative we are about rethinking programming, is absolutely critical in terms of creating relevance.

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00:44:52.209 --> 00:45:02.619

Simon Woods: Financial and organizational sustainability, I think everybody realizes the importance of that. And then this other theme that has really become clear in the last few years, organizational culture, and alignment.

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00:45:03.009 --> 00:45:04.269

Simon Woods: Orchestras are...

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00:45:04.709 --> 00:45:19.349

Simon Woods: complicated ecologies. They're complicated ecologies with different stakeholders of musicians and music directors and board members and staff, and we often see a somewhat different

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00:45:19.679 --> 00:45:26.989

Simon Woods: Perspective from each of those constituencies on, you know, what success looks like.

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00:45:27.079 --> 00:45:43.359

Simon Woods: And so, you know, that does just go to show that this notion of, sort of, collaborative culture is absolutely vital to us, you know, as we think about how to make our organization successful for the long term.

251

00:45:43.559 --> 00:45:48.009

Simon Woods: Youth development hardly needs adding. Equity, diversity, inclusion, we've touched on.

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00:45:48.149 --> 00:45:58.989

Simon Woods: This endless topic, tension between past and future, tradition and adaptation, applies in so many of these areas above. It's a topic that we will talk about on a daily basis.

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00:45:59.039 --> 00:46:09.509

Simon Woods: And then lastly, this whole notion of leadership development. Our field still needs to be more and more effective in how it develops the leaders of the next generation.

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00:46:11.229 --> 00:46:29.459

Simon Woods: So, let's just now, come to tell you a little bit about how the League's work fits into this, and I'm going to go through this, fairly swiftly. And what I'd like to invite you to do,

255

00:46:29.539 --> 00:46:41.759

Simon Woods: as I go through this next, kind of, 5 minutes, is to think about what questions you would like to ask. We're going to have, you know, we're going to have 5 to 10 minutes at the end of this in which Doug and I can attempt to ask

256

00:46:41.759 --> 00:46:50.469

Simon Woods: any burning questions you want. So, if you have questions, now is the moment to think about them and put them in the chat while I go through this next section.

257

00:46:51.449 --> 00:47:06.309

Simon Woods: Okay, a little bit about the League. The League was founded in the 1940s, first national conference occurring that same year. We've done a conference every year since then, and we have a long history as an organization.

258

00:47:06.359 --> 00:47:18.859

Simon Woods: It was originally founded in DC, but then it moved to New York, and it was rebranded as the League of American Orchestras. It initially started as, you saw here as the American Symphony Orchestra League. We have 26 staff.

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00:47:19.039 --> 00:47:34.649

Simon Woods: Plus contractors. We're based in New York, but actually only about half of us are in New York. I'm based in suburban New York, and our office is in New York. But we have staff now in Boston, Rochester, Detroit, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee. We have staff

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00:47:34.649 --> 00:47:40.869

Simon Woods: where our orchestras are. So we're not only, you know, we have a national reach with our people.

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00:47:41.539 --> 00:47:50.859

Simon Woods: And our budget's around \$7 million, and we get our income roughly equally between membership dues that Orchestra pays.

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00:47:51.099 --> 00:48:07.109

Simon Woods: earned revenue from our professional development programs and conference, and fundraised. And, you know, our biggest and most important constituency on fundraising, actually, is people like you. It is board members of American orchestras.

263

00:48:07.109 --> 00:48:19.089

Simon Woods: People who care deeply about music and the field, and care to support the work of supporting the whole field beyond their own organizations.

264

00:48:20.409 --> 00:48:22.319

Simon Woods: This is our vision and mission.

265

00:48:22.429 --> 00:48:38.119

Simon Woods: And I would just point out here, you know, we say in the mission to champion the vitality of music and orchestral experience, support the orchestra community, and lead change boldly. What does that tell you? It tells us that we're both a membership organization.

266

00:48:38.119 --> 00:48:50.929

Simon Woods: But we're also very much a leadership organization, trying to do the right thing to help advance change so that orchestras can be successful in the future. And that kind of duality in our mission is a really important part of who we are.

267

00:48:51.499 --> 00:49:07.249

Simon Woods: The league board is your representatives to the league. We have many board members on our fairly large national board, and really, I think it's true to say that the board is our kind of eyes and ears out in the profession.

268

00:49:07.329 --> 00:49:21.779

Simon Woods: the combination of the, you know, the many board members who are on our board, but also the field representation, our ex-officio members who represent all the different CEO groups and youth orchestras and the volunteer council.

269

00:49:21.779 --> 00:49:28.239

Simon Woods: These people come together four times a year to help us do the best work to support orchestras.

270

00:49:29.999 --> 00:49:42.929

Simon Woods: I'm not going to go down this, but here are our major programs in person, conferences, the Midwinter CEOs Conference, seminars, webinars, our professional development programs,

271

00:49:43.069 --> 00:50:02.909

Simon Woods: And, you know, we know from when we survey our members that convening and coming together, both in person and virtually, is one of the things that members most want. So, a lot of these in-person programs, which, you know, were on a brief hiatus during the pandemic, but are now back in force.

272

00:50:02.919 --> 00:50:05.299

Simon Woods: Are really at the core of who we are.

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00:50:05.359 --> 00:50:15.949

Simon Woods: But then we also have a huge amount of content which we produce, which is published. And we have a,

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00:50:16.309 --> 00:50:27.379

Simon Woods: We have a governance center full of resources for you, which David's already, you know, shown the link for that, I think, and I'll show you how to find this information in a second.

275

00:50:27.499 --> 00:50:42.519

Simon Woods: And then we have many, many other reports which come out, many of them every year, some of them every few years, all of which are available for you to access. But one of the most important things we do

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00:50:42.599 --> 00:50:50.249

Simon Woods: And, you know, we could talk all afternoon about this, because it is so incredibly important, is we have two people in Washington, D.C,

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00:50:50.609 --> 00:50:53.379

Simon Woods: Heather Noonan and Najean Lee.

278

00:50:54.039 --> 00:51:09.979

Simon Woods: And they, between them, have more than 50 years' experience of advocating in Washington, D.C, for orchestras. And in fact, the depth of their experience is such that they don't really only represent orchestras. We play a convening role

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00:51:09.979 --> 00:51:29.779

Simon Woods: in all the performing arts world, and we help to bring the performing arts advocacy and folks and CEOs together, regularly to make sure that we are telling our story in Washington, D.C, and beyond, and there's a lot of very important work that goes on there.

280

00:51:31.619 --> 00:51:43.079

Simon Woods: And as we're talking about Washington, D.C, this is just a nice little map that reminds us that we reach 100% of the Senate and 70% of the House of Representatives, so...

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00:51:43.269 --> 00:51:56.449

Simon Woods: We don't lobby in states, we only lobby nationally, but we rely on partnership with orchestras to get the message across, and the reach we have.

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00:51:56.659 --> 00:52:05.719

Simon Woods: With orchestra's help, it is absolutely enormous when we want to bring influence to bear on a particular issue.

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00:52:06.649 --> 00:52:18.099

Simon Woods: Doug alluded to this earlier, but obviously, this year has been a complicated year, not only in the area of equity, diversity, inclusion, but in many, many areas. And,

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00:52:18.429 --> 00:52:26.079

Simon Woods: You know, this is my moment to sort of say out loud, we are an absolutely

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00:52:26.529 --> 00:52:40.379

Simon Woods: I would say, religiously nonpartisan organization. We do have a platform of issues that we believe in, but we are absolutely nonpartisan, and we have many, many decades of success in DC.

286

00:52:40.379 --> 00:52:51.209

Simon Woods: Which come from our consistency in being nonpartisan. So, how did we respond to a very complicated year? We responded to it by providing resources.

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00:52:51.209 --> 00:52:56.129

Simon Woods: help orchestras navigate this changing landscape, and this is just an example of how we address that.

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00:52:56.999 --> 00:53:01.299

Simon Woods: And again, this is a whole webpage that you can look at when you have a moment.

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00:53:01.519 --> 00:53:07.239

Simon Woods: And lastly, before we, just answer a couple of questions, I'm just going to,

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00:53:07.439 --> 00:53:13.399

Simon Woods: remind you to go to the website. And on the website, there is one particular area that you might want to look at.

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00:53:14.259 --> 00:53:17.369

Simon Woods: two areas, actually. The first is, there's a search function.

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00:53:17.609 --> 00:53:27.479

Simon Woods: And I will tell you that in a few months, we're just working right now on a chatbot, which is going to appear on the website, and the chatbot is going to be huge

293

00:53:27.489 --> 00:53:40.229

Simon Woods: help, because it is going to, it's obviously going to be AI-based, and it's going to help people find the information that they want, because the website is incredibly dense. There is a vast amount of information on the website.

294

00:53:40.609 --> 00:53:58.289

Simon Woods: And it can sometimes be hard to navigate, so that's an enhancement that's coming after the holidays, actually, sometime in early 2026. But in the meantime, also, it's worth going to the Learn section, and as you pull down that drop-down menu, this is what you see.

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00:53:58.419 --> 00:54:15.999

Simon Woods: And I would just draw your attention to this topic list on the right-hand side here because you can find so much information here on the website about just about any topic that you want to find out about. This is your starting place. And if you don't find what you're looking for.

296

00:54:15.999 --> 00:54:25.879

Simon Woods: Please reach out to us and let us know, and we can point you to, some, great resources.

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00:54:26.499 --> 00:54:29.719

Simon Woods: So, I think that is,

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00:54:30.259 --> 00:54:36.289

Simon Woods: the end of the slides, so I'm going to stop the slides at this point, Doug.

299

00:54:36.639 --> 00:54:39.179

Simon Woods: Yeah. It's going to come back.

300

00:54:39.180 --> 00:54:41.480

Doug Hagerman: We have, yeah, we have some questions.

301

00:54:41.480 --> 00:54:42.350

Simon Woods: Yes.

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00:54:43.000 --> 00:54:46.099

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Go ahead, Doug, if you've seen the question.

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00:54:46.100 --> 00:54:55.280

Doug Hagerman: Yeah, yeah, I've got him here. Alright, so the first question is a direct question about something I said, so I'll answer that.

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00:54:55.510 --> 00:55:03.150

Doug Hagerman: What's the rationale for why one shouldn't speak with a potential board member before taking them to the governance committee?

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00:55:03.270 --> 00:55:13.069

Doug Hagerman: It's really twofold. One is that you don't know yet whether your governance committee's going to

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00:55:13.420 --> 00:55:15.460

Doug Hagerman: Want that particular person.

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00:55:15.780 --> 00:55:22.560

Doug Hagerman: And so you potentially are in an embarrassing situation of having to walk back in what looked like an invitation.

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00:55:22.840 --> 00:55:29.950

Doug Hagerman: But the second reason is you give that person a chance to say no before anyone's even had a chance to cultivate them.

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00:55:30.160 --> 00:55:38.040

Doug Hagerman: So the right way to do this is to maybe cultivate their interest in the symphony, like, you know.

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00:55:38.230 --> 00:55:50.739

Doug Hagerman: There's no reason saying, hey, would you join me for a concert, or let me tell you what's going on. But, in terms of actually talking to them about board service, you really should go through a governance committee first.

311

00:55:55.940 --> 00:55:59.009

Doug Hagerman: Okay, so our next question, I think,

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00:55:59.190 --> 00:56:15.659

Doug Hagerman: I don't know who wants to take this one. The question is about group, Group 8 orchestras, where we talked about every board member should make a personally significant gift. Some of the board members are musicians, they

313

00:56:16.170 --> 00:56:30.879

Doug Hagerman: don't particularly want to do that. How should we navigate that issue? You know, I think that there are situations where this becomes a lighter touch.

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00:56:30.990 --> 00:56:49.349

Doug Hagerman: And if you've got someone who's a volunteer musician and has also stepped up to be a board member, you don't have to lean on them hard for a contribution. On the other hand, it's nice if every board member is a contributor. When you can look your other donors in the eye and say, our board is contributing.

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00:56:49.440 --> 00:57:00.040

Doug Hagerman: And, so, I think it's best if you try and do something with every board member, even if everyone realizes it's not going to be a large amount of money.

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00:57:02.890 --> 00:57:17.479

Simon Woods: Doug, can I take this question about what would be the next staff position to add? Because I think that's kind of an interesting question. Sure. What would be the next staff position to add once we have a full-time ED, part-time personal coordinator, part-time admin assistant?

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00:57:17.600 --> 00:57:27.179

Simon Woods: And, you know, I was just thinking about that, I was thinking about how I would answer that, as you were just talking about the last question, and my answer to that is, I think, it depends on the strength of your executive director.

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00:57:27.290 --> 00:57:32.819

Simon Woods: If your executive director is a very artistic person, but is perhaps...

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00:57:32.950 --> 00:57:40.439

Simon Woods: you know, less familiar with writing grants and raising money, you might want to hire a grant writer, or you might want to hire a part-time

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00:57:40.590 --> 00:57:43.220

Simon Woods: You know, giving director, or somebody to do both.

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00:57:43.360 --> 00:57:50.920

Simon Woods: If your executive director is a great fundraiser but doesn't come so much from an artistic background.

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00:57:51.220 --> 00:57:54.910

Simon Woods: And we do see that sometimes in smaller orchestras.

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00:57:55.370 --> 00:58:11.519

Simon Woods: then maybe you want to hire an artistic person, a part-time artistic planner, to help work with the music director and put great seasons together. So, you know, I think it can go in any number of different directions to that, and I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all to that question. But it's a great question, actually.

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00:58:12.890 --> 00:58:21.890

Doug Hagerman: Okay, so I'm going to go to Joe Lanis' question in the Q&A. He asks for both of us, are there one or two key topics

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00:58:21.890 --> 00:58:34.759

Doug Hagerman: that every boardroom should be touching on at every meeting. And I think the answer to that is no, Joe. Certainly as it relates to those strategic and generative topics, I think you need to have, like.

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00:58:34.760 --> 00:58:49.989

Doug Hagerman: a vision for over the course of 12 or 24 months, we're going to make sure we cover the following things, but you don't need to cover all of them at every board meeting. So one board meeting might be focused on long-term financial planning.

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00:58:50.160 --> 00:58:58.660

Doug Hagerman: Another board meeting might be focused on community partnerships. Another board meeting might be focused on,

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00:58:58.770 --> 00:59:08.720

Doug Hagerman: youth participation. Like, so I think the answer is no. On the other hand, I do think that most board meetings are going to have some sort of finance report.

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00:59:09.060 --> 00:59:24.430

Doug Hagerman: And some sort of key updates from your CEO or executive director. I'll say on the subject of finance reports, I'm a real stickler for not putting up large pages of numbers with

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00:59:24.840 --> 00:59:39.030

Doug Hagerman: Because boards never follow that, so if someone's putting a chart up on a PowerPoint at a board meeting, and there's more than, say, 15 or 20 numbers on it, it's generally going to be worthless.

331

00:59:39.410 --> 00:59:44.689

Doug Hagerman: So, think about how you do your finance reports so that people actually understand them.

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00:59:45.470 --> 00:59:47.579

Doug Hagerman: Anything to add to that, Simon?

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00:59:47.990 --> 01:00:03.470

Simon Woods: No, I think that's great. I mean, the broader question, of course, is what are the topics that boards don't talk about in general, but should be raised up? And one of the things that Doug's referred to earlier is this whole notion of community representation.

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01:00:03.470 --> 01:00:14.479

Simon Woods: And the question I think boards should generally probably do a slightly better job of asking than they often do is ask whose voices are not included?

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01:00:14.860 --> 01:00:28.609

Simon Woods: who is not included in the board discussion? Who needs to be included? Whether that is different, communities within your community, or different demographics, or young people, I think that's a great thing to ask.

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01:00:28.970 --> 01:00:35.179

Simon Woods: Can I just do a real quick one? Linda Stevens asked,

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01:00:35.280 --> 01:00:49.300

Simon Woods: Single tickets and subscriptions revenue grew at a higher percentage than ticket subscriptions sold. Was this due to an increase in prices? I don't know the answer to that, but yes, I assume absolutely that is to do with price increases, and of course.

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01:00:49.300 --> 01:00:55.440

Simon Woods: Many orchestras have used inflation as a pretext, justifiable pretext, to increase prices.

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01:00:57.390 --> 01:01:04.469

Doug Hagerman: Okay, let's go back up to the one above that, and Simon, I know at some point you need to leave to catch a plane, so...

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01:01:04.470 --> 01:01:06.769

Simon Woods: Yeah, I will hop off in a minute, but I'll let you.

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01:01:06.770 --> 01:01:25.560

Doug Hagerman: But we're going to keep going until we get through all these. So, one person said, some of this is contradictory. For example, diversifying board membership might mean folks give something other than money. Asking them to make a significant monetary donation might not work.

343

01:01:27.360 --> 01:01:45.169

Doug Hagerman: I think my response to that is, yes, I agree. And this notion of how much people give in conjunction with their board service is a controversial one, because some orchestras have worked very hard to

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01:01:45.210 --> 01:01:57.059

Doug Hagerman: increase the board giving by setting minimum contribution levels. On the other hand, we all need to recognize that there are people in our communities who can contribute things to our board dynamic

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01:01:57.280 --> 01:02:13.720

Doug Hagerman: Other than money. And we need to think about how we can include them without discouraging anyone else who's got a fact checkbook, and get that right balance, and make sure everyone understands what everyone else is contributing. So, yes.

346

01:02:13.950 --> 01:02:15.179

Doug Hagerman: Yes, with that.

347

01:02:16.330 --> 01:02:34.520

Simon Woods: Can I just do a quick one before I hop off, Doug? Arthur's question about how does a league define orchestras? Does it include small experimental ensembles? The answer to that is, you know, every kind of thing, everybody who defines themselves as an orchestra is welcome in our family, right?

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01:02:35.190 --> 01:02:44.819

Simon Woods: Some smaller orchestras and organizations find a tremendous amount of value through what we do. Some are so,

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01:02:44.870 --> 01:03:04.040

Simon Woods: different in their business models and the way they approach the world that much of what we talk about is not that relevant. So, it's a mixture, but we definitely have some small organizations who are very, very creative, in our, in our league and orchestra family.

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01:03:07.090 --> 01:03:08.809

Doug Hagerman: Okay, vote is 8.

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01:03:08.950 --> 01:03:16.820

Doug Hagerman: from the UK. I'm not familiar with their youth development program, but the sentiment behind this question, of course, is an important one.

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01:03:16.910 --> 01:03:28.679

Doug Hagerman: We have identified, we at the league have identified that, young people being exposed to orchestral music, whether that's classical music or something else, but

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01:03:28.680 --> 01:03:40.159

Doug Hagerman: Is, a critical challenge for our field, and so developing all the pathways in which youth can participate and,

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01:03:40.250 --> 01:03:45.319

Doug Hagerman: You know, exposure to orchestral music is really important.

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01:03:45.510 --> 01:04:03.860

Doug Hagerman: I don't think we can compete with pop culture in terms of the attention of young people, and I'm not sure we want to try, but on the other hand, we've got to give them a chance to be exposed to this, because, so that when someone offers to put an instrument in their hands, or invites them to sing in a choir, or whatever the case might be.

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01:04:03.970 --> 01:04:05.239

Doug Hagerman: They might

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01:04:05.390 --> 01:04:15.500

Doug Hagerman: think about saying yes to that. So, that is a very important challenge for our field, just to give youth everything from

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01:04:15.520 --> 01:04:32.440

Doug Hagerman: talented young kids who are already playing an instrument and giving them a chance to hone their craft, to other kids who probably haven't ever had a chance to pick up an instrument and just want a chance to play something in the band. We give all those kids a chance. So, that's my point of view on that one.

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01:04:34.650 --> 01:04:35.550

Doug Hagerman: Okay.

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01:04:36.050 --> 01:04:37.120

Doug Hagerman: Let's see...

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01:04:39.750 --> 01:04:49.300

Doug Hagerman: What do you think of the idea of behind-the-scenes sponsorships where board members can sponsor other board members, basically giving on their behalf?

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01:04:49.540 --> 01:04:50.700

Doug Hagerman: Oh, gosh.

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01:04:50.920 --> 01:05:00.529

Doug Hagerman: It's a nice idea. I think it's a little dangerous. I would rather see...

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01:05:00.670 --> 01:05:09.540

Doug Hagerman: person A give a lot of money, and Person B give \$5, then Person A give \$10,000 for Person B.

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01:05:09.780 --> 01:05:21.699

Doug Hagerman: I guess that's my off-the-cuff response to that question, so that no one feels like they're valued, or that someone bought someone else, or something like that. I just...

366

01:05:22.090 --> 01:05:35.650

Doug Hagerman: I sort of cringe at that idea, but we don't want to discourage the person who's generous, nor do we want to discourage the person who's got something to contribute but doesn't have a lot of money. That's how I'd say it.

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01:05:35.760 --> 01:05:38.080

Doug Hagerman: Yes.

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01:05:38.390 --> 01:05:45.830

Doug Hagerman: We talked about bringing youth into concert halls. We have to go online. Well, yup.

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01:05:45.980 --> 01:06:01.770

Doug Hagerman: Yeah, a lot of orchestras have tried to have a social media presence. It's not easy, it takes resources, it takes consistency. There have been a lot of people and orchestras that have started with YouTube channels and podcasts and the like.

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01:06:01.790 --> 01:06:14.880

Doug Hagerman: but haven't kept it up, it's a challenge for our field. It's the kind of thing that tends to get cut when budgets are tight. So, yeah, of course, Garen, I totally agree with the sentiment.

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01:06:15.510 --> 01:06:22.660

Doug Hagerman: Okay, let's see. Deborah Bronstein, staying in your lane, yes, okay.

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01:06:22.990 --> 01:06:28.959

Doug Hagerman: Do you have materials we can reference for clarifying. Well,

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01:06:29.120 --> 01:06:34.440

Doug Hagerman: I mean, feel free to use that slide that I put up about staying in your lane, and to...

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01:06:34.570 --> 01:06:38.790

Doug Hagerman: You know, to point out to the person that,

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01:06:39.000 --> 01:06:43.769

Doug Hagerman: you know, we've hired professionals based on their expertise. We...

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01:06:43.910 --> 01:07:03.499

Doug Hagerman: You're not on the board to second-guess those individuals. We provide oversight and high-level direction. We don't tell people what to do. I think every board chair at some point has to have a conversation with someone, someone.

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01:07:03.500 --> 01:07:16.479

Doug Hagerman: who's gotten too in the weeds and has gotten too prescriptive with staff, and just to say, look, understand what you're doing to that staff member. You're crushing their productivity.

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01:07:16.950 --> 01:07:32.009

Doug Hagerman: If every time you have an idea about a program, or a donor, or whatever it might be, you send an email and you want a response right away, you create a do loop for that staff member that takes them away from the core of their job.

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01:07:32.660 --> 01:07:44.620

Doug Hagerman: And that's not why you're on board, to distract the staff. You're on board to empower the staff, not to distract them. So I think there's a conversation that needs to be had. I do have, in terms of material.

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01:07:44.740 --> 01:07:50.619

Doug Hagerman: about Deborah, the closest I have to something like that is,

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01:07:50.740 --> 01:08:01.769

Doug Hagerman: a very wise board chair and a very wise CEO in our field, at one point in time, created a document about how they were going to support each other.

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01:08:01.980 --> 01:08:08.170

Doug Hagerman: So the board chair says to the CEO, you can count on the following from me.

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01:08:08.300 --> 01:08:11.129

Doug Hagerman: Like, like, I'm never going to embarrass you in public.

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01:08:11.270 --> 01:08:24.199

Doug Hagerman: Not going to blindside you, not going to micromanage you, you know, etc., like, all the different things. And then the CEO said, here's the way I'm going to support you as the board chair. I'm going to keep you informed.

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01:08:24.319 --> 01:08:29.480

Doug Hagerman: You're, you know, you're going to learn about things from me, not from someone else.

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01:08:29.630 --> 01:08:33.729

Doug Hagerman: that are on and on and on.

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01:08:34.120 --> 01:08:38.740

Doug Hagerman: We're going to plan board meetings together, etc. So you can

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01:08:38.970 --> 01:08:42.580

Doug Hagerman: Go into a little bit more of those

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01:08:43.090 --> 01:08:46.710

Doug Hagerman: Concepts about how staffs and boards interact.

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01:08:46.850 --> 01:08:56.049

Doug Hagerman: you know, using kind of a set of clarified expectations like that. As I said before, job descriptions help a lot.

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01:08:56.540 --> 01:09:09.249

Doug Hagerman: And, if, if something's in the job description of the music director, and to, to, to, to lead, for example, the...

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01:09:09.319 --> 01:09:19.039

Doug Hagerman: artistic vision of the organization. Well then, that makes it fairly easy to go to a board member and say, hey, this is the music director's job.

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01:09:19.569 --> 01:09:39.099

Doug Hagerman: Right? And so I think some of those clarifying documents, some of those job descriptions, even just having the conversation. I mean, I have to tell you that before I got elected to the board, to my first orchestra board, I thought that board members decided what

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01:09:39.180 --> 01:09:54.459

Doug Hagerman: pieces were going to be played at concerts. I mean, well, it took me about 6 minutes to realize that that wasn't right, but that's what I thought before I entered my first board meeting. So, sometimes it's just a matter of clarifying this for people. They may just not know.

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01:09:55.630 --> 01:10:01.579

Doug Hagerman: So, we got through all the questions in the Q&A. Do we have any in the chat, David, that I need to look at?

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01:10:01.580 --> 01:10:03.720

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: No, I think we got through all of those as well.

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01:10:04.430 --> 01:10:06.240

Doug Hagerman: Okay, great.

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01:10:06.570 --> 01:10:07.430

Doug Hagerman: Great.

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01:10:07.730 --> 01:10:13.999

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Thank you, Doug, and thank you, Simon, for all your great wisdom, and

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01:10:14.170 --> 01:10:18.449

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Again, we will be sharing the PowerPoint.

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01:10:18.630 --> 01:10:24.200

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Slides, video, and transcript, and we, again,

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01:10:24.480 --> 01:10:40.999

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: hope that when you depart, you'll fill out the evaluation form, which helped influence our content for today. Thank you again for joining us. We hope you'll consider also joining us in Baltimore for our national conference June 1st through 3rd. We'll be having some

403

01:10:41.000 --> 01:10:52.719

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: special programming with an orchestra board form during the conference. We will also be unveiling a new version of this handbook. Some of you may have the Effective Orchestra Guide

404

01:10:52.720 --> 01:10:56.830

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: This blue book on your, desk.

405

01:10:56.970 --> 01:11:00.850

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: After nearly a decade, there

406

01:11:01.190 --> 01:11:07.639

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: will be a new edition coming out, this spring and unveiled at the conference. So, looking forward to

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01:11:08.460 --> 01:11:20.150

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: those events coming up, and also our next webinar will be on Wednesday, January the 21st, on social media to help with marketing and audience development.

408

01:11:20.170 --> 01:11:44.070

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: But again, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to be in touch with me. January 8th is the deadline to register for conference to get our lowest rate, and so that Destination Baltimore is available for members on our website right now. So, let us know if you have any questions, and we look forward to seeing many of you in 2026, and hope you have a

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01:11:44.070 --> 01:11:46.070

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Great rest of 2025.

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01:11:46.290 --> 01:11:54.970

Doug Hagerman: So, David, just before you cut off, there were a couple people who wanted to speak with me offline about things. Go ahead and include my email [doughagerman@gmail.com]

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01:11:55.620 --> 01:12:03.239

Doug Hagerman: when you circulate the replay. Okay. If anyone wants to follow up with anything, I'm here for you.

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01:12:04.260 --> 01:12:10.460

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Great. Thank you so much, Doug. Thank you, everyone, for joining, and we'll look forward to seeing you in the new year.

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01:12:12.140 --> 01:12:12.600

Doug Hagerman: Thanks, David.

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01:12:12.600 --> 01:12:13.990

David Styers, League of American Orchestras: Take care, everyone. Bye-bye.