

Community Impact Through Mission-Aligned Partnerships

2026 National Conference

KELLY WALTRIP: Joining me on this illustrious panel is Randy Wong, the President and CEO of the Hawaii Youth Symphony. He's currently the Vice President of the Youth Orchestra Division Board, a champion for making music a right in Hawaii and making magic happen for kids everywhere. He is a fantastic bass player, educator, administrator, and one of the people I want to be when I grow up. So Randy Wong from Hawaii, and next to him Rachel Schultz, currently the Chief Operating Officer for Hawaii Youth Symphony. She's also on the YOD board and Chair of the YOD at 50 celebration. Also a founding member of Toledo Symphony School of Music, pianist, educator, and her drive for innovation and expanding community impact is just totally inspiring. So thank you, Rachel, for joining us. And then next to Randy on the other side, is Richard Scerbo. Did I get that right? He's the Director of the National Orchestra Institute and Festival, where he leads one of the nation's most prestigious training programs for young orchestral musicians right here in Maryland. He also partners extensively with the Hawaii Youth Symphony, which we'll learn more about today. Richard is a bassoonist, conductor, and champion of American music. And I think you'll learn a lot from him.

And then closest to me, Katherine Beeson, is someone that I've had the opportunity to work with closely. She's the assistant principal violist at the Colorado Symphony, but so many more things than that. She has held numerous administrative roles with orchestras and festivals of all sizes, past Director of Community Education, Executive Director, a festival director, and then there's nothing she can't do—musician, teaching artist, programmer, podcaster, if you haven't checked that out, someone who does pre-concert talks and is a sensory-friendly champion.

This is a wonderful panel that I know you'll get a lot out of talking to today. So give them a round of applause.

[APPLAUSE]

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We're going to kick this off by starting the farthest west, in Hawaii. So Randy, tell us a little bit about the partnership history and journey for you all.

RANDY WONG: Sure. Hi, everybody. Aloha. It's great to see all of you here. It's 2:00 a.m. for me, but I'm happy to be here for an early morning session. We're here to talk with you about our program at Hawaii Youth Symphony and our summer festival, the Pacific Music Institute,

which grew into what we're going to talk about, the Orchestral Learning Alliance with the National Orchestral Institute. Oh, my God, that's a lot of organizational names. But basically, to give you some background and some context, HYS has been around for 61 years. And at the time that we began this project, we had just emerged from the retirement of our long-standing music director. He had been with us for 33 years. At the time, I was undertaking the League's Emerging Leaders Program. I was learning all about strategic visioning and adaptive leadership and so forth. I asked my board to bring in a facilitator, who some of you may know, John McCann, and we started to think about: What is it about the work of youth orchestras, specifically in Hawaii, that is so transformational for youth? And what does that mean for our community?

So we went from a very traditional kind of older-school youth orchestra model, where you really just try and get the top kids into the top orchestra and send them off to college, and who knows what happens? Maybe they come back as donors or something. And we really were thinking, well, there are so many great things about—no matter what level of program you're in, music is really beneficial to all. And we codified that through our vision statement, which at the time was to make music a right, and has since become our vision—that music is a right in Hawaii.

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We changed our mission statement from developing orchestral players and so forth, to really what is the broadest possible mission statement? So to foster fun and creative opportunities for youth through the deep appreciation for music and in the context of our island's culture.

And then we came up with these core values. A lot of times people think you've got all these words and all these phrases, and does it just sit on the shelf? But we really use it as a way to be very deeply committed to what we are and what we believe in and how we vet and think about—and to give us the courage to think of what our work could be, whether it's through our direct programming or through partnerships. And so that led us to looking at our demographics. So on this next slide, you can see we started to think about, well, who are the kids that we're serving? How and why? And what types of access do they have to music education? So obviously we're in Hawaii, so there's definitely a geographic isolation from everything else, but there's also geographic separation between the islands. So we've got kids that are coming from all different parts of the state. Many of them are coming from parts that have high poverty or very low median income. And so actually this is the map that the League produced for us. We gave them all of our students' residential zip codes over 60 years, and we wanted to see over time how it tracked. And especially in the last 10 years, as

we unveiled this vision, are we reaching parts of the island or parts of the state that are with less access?

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And then as we started to think about access in terms of financial and geographic domains, we also started to think about artistic access. And so what does that mean in terms of, do they have a school band or orchestra program? Is it a one-size-fits-all model, or do they have access to chamber music? If they're doing chamber music of any kind, is it just trumpet ensemble, or is it really mixed brass, where you've got all the brass in there. And so then we started to think, well, there's probably not a lot of access, but we don't know. But that's actually a topic for the next panel. So I'll go into that later. But really, the thing is, if they don't have access, how do we get it to them? It's very expensive to go to another part of the country to attend a Tanglewood or an Interlochen or an Aspen or something like that. And so that means that pretty much everyone in the state is cut off from really developing themselves to their full potential as musicians.

Between that and our vision, mission and values, we started to workshop it with our team, and between artistic leadership and staff and alumni, we said, "Well, if we were to import some sorts of experiences to Hawaii, what could it look like? And how would we do it? Because we can't do it by ourselves. We would need to have some sort of partnership." And I recalled, and some of our other team members recalled attending the National Orchestral Institute. Some of the things that were really beneficial about that, just from a high level, were that our program, our Pacific Music Institute program is in July, and the National Orchestral Institute is in June. So then we're like, "Oh, maybe that would be a great way to start the conversation." And that's when we reached out to our friend and colleague, Richard Scerbo.

RICHARD SCERBO: Hello, everyone, And thank you, Randy. We started this conversation about partnership in 2018.

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I had just started as director of the Institute a few years before that. I inherited a program that had many traditional training opportunities through masterclasses, sectionals, weekly concerts. But I was really interested in what opportunities our fellows could have that would really launch them in the next part of their orchestral careers, but also reflect the changing landscape of what orchestral musicians are doing in the United States. So this is looking at areas of professional development, community engagement, and innovative programming. And so through a number of different opportunities, we've seen that our NOI fellows are really interested in taking the opportunities that they have at NOI, where they are soaking in

knowledge and experience from some of the great teachers in the field, the orchestral musicians, and having a chance to give back and relay that knowledge again to students that may be just a few years younger than them in high school.

And so when Randy and I got together to talk about this, we spent a year or so planning. We had a pretty detailed sketch of what we wanted the festival and partnership to look like. And we sent, I think, 11 teaching fellows that first year to PMI. And we didn't know a pandemic would happen right after we launched this, so we had to be flexible and nimble in the years that followed. But this is all to say that our teaching fellows now have the opportunity to take what they're learning at NOI and then transmit it again to students that are just coming before them.

WONG: In addition to those teaching fellows, actually, didn't you also send a whole bunch of NOI faculty?

SCERBO: That's right, yes. So the first year of the partnership—

WONG: We went big, and then we were like, "Oh-oh!" [LAUGHTER]

SCERBO: What happened before the pandemic is just a distant memory now, but that's right, we had 11 teaching fellows and maybe just as many faculty members that we collaborated on. And we found that even some of our faculty members had connections to Hawaii.

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Also, some of them had been principal members of the Hawaii Symphony. So there were some really cool connections that we uncovered going through the planning process.

WALTRIP: Amazing. And then Rachel entered the picture and just kind of brought everything to a new level. Can you share a little bit about that strategic alignment?

SCHULTZ: Well, it was already like this well-oiled machine. But I think when Randy just went over the core values, the mission, the vision. And I think what he failed to mention were our strategic priorities that they also laid out throughout the same—coming up with the mission vision and all that fun stuff. So access, branding, finance, making sure everything is sustainable, PMI, making that high quality for everyone in the Pacific Rim, and partnerships and training. And so every aspect of the relationship is seen through that lens. There are these tent poles that the relationship has to fit with. And so as the relationship has changed and developed, and we'll talk a little bit about how it has transitioned and where we're going next, but everything comes back to does it meet mission, vision, core values and strategic priorities? And that, I think, as you're sitting here thinking about which different

partnerships, which collaborations you can have, always have that be your north star. Always have that be guiding you as you make these decisions and have these discussions.

WALTRIP: Great. Thank you so much for that overview. And then we also wanted to take a look at another community, also out West that has a really strong history of partnership and collaboration. So I'm passing it to Catherine Beeson to give a little bit of an overview of some of the partnerships that have evolved over time and the importance of failure and trust in this kind of idea.

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CATHERINE BEESON: Thank you for leading with failure. [LAUGHTER] Good morning. Well, I mean failure is an essential step on the way to success. So I am actually weirdly glad that you led with it. It's not even 2:00 a.m. for me, and I'm not having a successful time with language right now. Thank you. Thank you very much, Randy. I'm just siphoning your 2:00 a.m. over here.

Good morning. I'm going to get started again. I'm really excited to be on this panel today because I think we're all very deeply interested in this work, and it's just so great to highlight the strengths that can come from these strategic partnerships. I know that Kelly said I'm with the Colorado Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony has had a history of really strong partnerships that are part of the youth-to-stage pipeline for a while. Part of that, too, is because the Colorado Symphony has enjoyed for a very long time its history of a collaborative model. A lot of our musicians are encouraged and show up to the work already mission-aligned for youth development. But we have a lot of buy-in from our musicians to do this work in the community. So that has been really, really wonderful, and part of that is due to our governing structure, which includes musicians on the on the board and things like that.

Is the slide up there? It is. I want to just do an overview of a couple of programs that got started around the same time in earnest in different ways, and they are very, very different. They're both stories of success, but one of them does include a little bit of a grieving process. So on the left you'll see one of my favorite pictures of this collaboration, the strategic partnership that we had with a group called Road to Hope, Haiti. And this was an organization that got started right after that terrible, terrible earthquake.

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They were providing a lot of funding to rebuild schools and other cultural facilities that would lift the community, a specific community in Mirebalais, Haiti. They happened to be based in Denver, and it's a small, family-run foundation that was doing this, and their son—

this is so detailed, but it's really important, stick with me. Their son was about to have his bar mitzvah, and he needed a project. And he was a bass player. There must be something in the water. He was a bass player, and what he thought might really be a good idea was to help support this fledgling youth orchestra that was getting started at one of the schools that they were helping to rebuild. And so he, this 12-year-old boy who was about to have his 13-year-old experience, came and pitched this idea to the Colorado Symphony Director of Education, who was me at the time. I took the meeting, like he was a grown adult. And it was really fun watching him struggle through this, [LAUGHTER] and supporting him with his little notebook.

But really, he had a strong presentation, and I heard it, and I thought to myself, "Am I about to say yes to this kid?" And then I did. The story is longer than that, but there was a lot of planning that had to occur. Haiti was not in the best place at that time. It has continued to be not in the best place, unfortunately, but the passion was there for this. And they already had a little bit of experience. And so we were really counting on them to make sure that the travel situation was going to be okay, that the lodging, all of that would be fine.

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So what we ended up doing was we decided to create a partnership that was like an exchange program. They would provide all of the things that were necessary for our musicians in the Colorado Symphony to travel to Haiti and work directly with this orchestra. Our primary goals were to make sure that we not only offered coaching for large ensembles like you see on the screen, but private lessons, small group lessons, performance opportunities for the students in small groups and large groups. Also performing from our musicians. We sent three musicians in the first year. And then we, in the second year and the third year that we ran this program, we included a student musician from Denver as well. The idea was that we are creating a layered kind of experience for the students there.

So the younger students are getting all of the help from us, but also from the older students, the more experienced students, so that we would give them pedagogy instruction as well. And really the outcome we were looking for was that they would be able to model this for themselves, that they would not need anyone to parachute into their community and help them figure out how to do the things. They already know how to figure out how to do things. We're just sort of speeding it up for them a little bit and helping them leave the nest.

Then we selected three or four of their students to travel to the U.S. and further that relationship through pedagogy instruction, through access to orchestra rehearsals, symphony rehearsals. They happened to come one year when Yo-Yo Ma was performing with us. And Kelly, I can't believe you didn't pick that picture. How dare!

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He was so gracious with them, speaking French, and the picture that I gave her, actually, I happened to snap when he kneeled in order to speak with them. So he looks extremely small. It's very wild, the perspective on that, but it kind of tells the story of where we wanted to go with this.

The impact to the student that we took with us from Denver is immeasurable. One of them is still doing this work out in the world as a fully-fledged adult. The other one takes it in a different kind of way, but the leadership training that they received and the empathy training that comes along with that is really incredible. The students that we brought from Haiti to the U.S. have continued also. Some of them are here, some of them are in Haiti. This program only ran for three years. We had expected it to go longer, but the situation in the country just became too tricky. It was going to be extremely difficult for us to continue to find visas to bring the students here. So we had to close that program, and that was painful. But around the same time, on the right-hand side, you'll see what's going on still now today, which is a strategic alliance with the Denver Young Artists Orchestra. DYAO had started as a part of the Denver Symphony in the 1970s, and do you remember the 1970s? The 1900s were a quaint time, weren't they? [LAUGHTER] The DYAO had started with the Denver Symphony in the 1970s and maintained a close relationship even after the close of the Denver Symphony and the rebirth of the Colorado Symphony. And this was exhibited in many ways that we all know and see in our communities today—sectional coachings, private and group instruction, invitations to join in side-by-side concerts, and things like that.

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But we really wanted to make sure that this was formalized into an alliance, a partnership. And that started in earnest in 2018, just as this Haiti partnership was coming to a close. And this is the thing that I think is really important. It was a heartwarming story I told about Zach coming to me as a 12-year-old and pitching this idea from his parents' foundation. But the external force that brought this idea to us made us go a little too quickly, I think, in the planning. And maybe we didn't consider a few things that might have helped us realize that this might be a short-term project. I think it's important to listen to external groups like this. But more important is to have a lot of planning conversations. And we learned that lesson. And so this one with the DYAO came from internal. The Colorado Symphony really was driving this a little bit more. We had already had conversations with another company, a healthcare company, DaVita, about doing some collaborative work. And it ended up being part of the strategic partnership.

So because it was driven from inside the organization, inside our organization, I think we had just a little bit different kind of thoughtful approach about it, and that's probably why it has been a little bit more successful. The relationship between the Colorado Symphony, between Denver Young Artists Orchestra and this funding partner, the healthcare organization DaVita, has really resulted in some pretty fun stuff.

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There are joint collective community projects and performances like what we call the "DaVita Day of Music." Youth and professional musicians perform in 20 different dialysis clinics around the community every year. It's just like a giant pop-up, and so it's pretty impactful. Then there's mentoring through regular sectionals throughout the year. This is building relationships more than just a once-a-year drop-in side-by-side concert situation, which has its own merits. So of course we continue the side-by-side concerts. Students will attend concerts of the Colorado Symphony on a regular basis. They further that relationship that they're building with the professional musicians by seeing them in and out of the workspace in that way, and then just joint programs and community impact work with DaVita program.

We have hospital side-by-sides as well. And something that I know Kelly mentioned that I'm really proud to have started when I was directing the education programs there, which is sensory-friendly programming, which comes in every kind of shape and size in the community, and talk about an empathy-building practice. That's really, really vital. Masterclasses with guest artists. What am I leaving out? The connection with the symphony conductors actually is really important, because then there are leadership skills that are being developed. And so we've now seen—well, I think there are two members of the Colorado Symphony now that came from the DYAO.

WALTRIP: There are actually eight.

BEESON: Eight? I work here.

WALTRIP: So from the stage pipeline, it has been really rewarding to see that number continue to grow. There are some members of the Colorado Symphony who were in the very first year of DYAO and then the next year were in the Denver Symphony.

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But throughout the history of 40+ years relationship, to see that number continue to grow, and I think we added three just this year. So it's been really great to see both subs and winning auditions.

BEESON: Yeah, and not only that, but we're not hoping to only fill the Colorado Symphony with DYAO students, but they have gone on to many other orchestras in this country. There's a bassoonist, Morgan Davison, who's going to be coming and playing at my chamber music series. So, you know, I'm feeling old right now. Okay, I think that might cover it. Did I miss anything?

WALTRIP: I think the one thing I would add is, because of the work that these two organizations did, it's something that also enabled the youth orchestra to do even more work in terms of making the music more accessible. The partnership really allowed DYAO to create a program called Pathways, which also involved the professional musicians and was able to do these wraparound services. So historically, we had scholarship programs for the youth orchestra, but with this partnership with the Colorado Symphony, DYAO was able to provide private lessons and instruments and transportation and concert attire—anything that might have been a barrier. And we were able to see, over the course of this relationship in the past five years, the demographics really shift within the organization and really see students have opportunities that they may not otherwise have had, including some right here at Peabody who went through this program and had the opportunity to work with an incredible teacher from the Colorado Symphony. So it's been an incredible opportunity to see these students go off, as I'm sure in Hawaii, you're seeing through your programs. But I want to make sure, before we move on to the next section, is there anything else that you feel like we've missed from a mission-aligned partnership that just has to be stated before we kind go into—

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WONG: No, I should say, though, that there are youth orchestras across the country that are doing this work in equity and access to provide more opportunities for youth and to build their communities. So it's not just exclusive to, you know, just HYS or DYAO.

WALTRIP: Okay, so this next section, we want to kind of open up for more just whoever wants to weigh in, the sustaining collaboration process discussion. So what does it take? How often and in what formats do you communicate? What kind of formalized process do you have in order to work together? How do you evaluate success? And how critical is it to have leadership buy-in? How much time? Feel free to jump in and weigh in on any of those topics.

WONG: Well, I think it takes an extraordinary team to put everything together. As we stated earlier, we started big, and it was too big. It was unwieldy, actually, to be quite honest. And over time, as we started to really be in touch with each other—we're on a giant text message and we're just always in touch and so forth. We started to get some ideas. And when Rachel came on board, it really made it possible to think much more strategically about what are the most important parts of this relationship and how can we really dial them in? So maybe you want to—

SCHULTZ: So I just want to give a little bit, even maybe more background. So as I mentioned, they had 11 faculty and 11 student musicians. My first summer—well, last summer, we had four musicians that were working with a local person from the island that would help them do the outreach. And then last winter was the first time that we actually expanded the partnership to happen during the school year.

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And we had, again, four musicians come out and help with the outreach that our students—being a youth orchestra, our students can't really go into the schools too much because they are in school themselves. So the OLA fellows were able to go to the neighbor islands and do some more work in community centers and with the schools there that our students couldn't actually do.

By partnering them with a local musician, it helps give insight into the community, the culture, but also helps to model. I mean, because these are pre-professional college, maybe recent college grads that are coming in. So just giving them more tools as they go out into the workforce. So we're excited. This summer, we're getting ready. We'll have three fellows coming to visit for PMI. So it's about a 10-day long program that they'll be there for coaching. They'll be visiting a couple different islands. We will, this fall, be expanding and have two more fellows come out, which might be brand new information for some other of our HYS employees in the audience. And so they'll be coming out in the fall and doing something, and then they'll be coming out again, going on our Neighbor Island Tour in February.

So this is what it comes down to. What do we need? Access is very important to us. So how can we reach more students? Our students are already overstretched. So we needed to have them come in. How can we give our current students more experience? How can we give them experience from maybe the continent by bringing these other professional musicians? And then they are learning these life skills. So it really is kind of a win-win situation for everybody. I got way off topic, though. We were talking about—We have very—The communication, it started off, I think you guys had a very long, intense, comprehensive document. And then now, it's more of like these micro, mini, macro MOUs.

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All three of us and everybody on our team share the same sort of priorities in that it's all about the students, whether it's our HYS students, whether it's the students we're reaching, whether it's the NOI fellows as students. So there's this constant feedback and training that's going on between all. Randy or I, and Richard, we're at every session that the students present. We're able to say, "Hey, that worked really well," or maybe "Don't touch on that." So we're able to give that immediate feedback right away so that everybody can keep learning and growing.

SCERBO: Under the idea of sustaining collaboration, I just want to say one thing that might be obvious to a lot of people in the room, but I think it's been a key to our success and how our partnership has evolved, which is almost extreme or radical flexibility in how we approach each iteration of this partnership. So we started with this big idea that we would bring 11 students and 11 faculty every summer to the Pacific Music Institute. And we learned a lot that first summer, and we had to scale down because of the pandemic the next summer, and two summers after that. But what we realized is that there were opportunities, what Randy and Rachel were mentioning, to have a greater impact throughout the year, that we could bring fellows in the fall and the spring and meet other communities throughout the state of Hawaii.

So we've evolved from a place of—and I don't want to steal Randy's thunder—but we've evolved from a place of sort of one macro agreement to these ideas of collaborating around each iteration and really thinking deeply about what does this visit for our NOI students, the OLA fellows, what does this visit entail? How can we have the most impact? Who are we working with on each visit? Which communities are we entering? Which musicians from the islands are partnering with us to enhance that impact? So that idea of flexibility has been really key to sustaining this collaboration.

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WONG: Right, so we pared down. We were like, "Okay, too big." So we got rid of actually bringing the NOI faculty, which was the whole initial idea. And we realized that we really wanted to double down on the outreach component. And so in the first iteration, we had two string quartets that we had brought out. But then we realized that actually there are a lot of really great string faculty locally. And what we wanted to do rather was to have an opportunity for our wind and brass students to work with wind and brass teaching fellows.

And so from there, we got the idea that maybe in every summer, we'll bring in a wind quintet because that would be really helpful. And a lot of our local musicians are not available, our local professional musicians are not available during the summer because we don't have an

extensive professional summer season. So a lot of folks, they go off and do a music festival or Grant Park or whatever, right? And so that created an opportunity gap there. And so from there, we're like, "Well, if we're going to have a wind quintet of teaching fellows in the summer, and now we want to expand to do another tour in the spring, what could we do with that? So then we decided we were going to bring in a brass quintet. And by doing that, we're also going to break down that barrier of we only have trumpet ensemble or trombone or low brass choir. Now we're going to have a brass quintet where the kids can really have that additional experience.

BEESON: I was just looking at Kelly's questions, and I'm going to go for the hot potato here. How critical is it to have leadership buy-in from the outset, and how do you transition new staff when trust is built with those that came before you? I think this is really important.

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There is so much change that can happen in program work like this, especially with so many different prongs to this work. And what I keep coming back to over and over again is that we're building cultural infrastructure. And that is so deeply important. And it really is part of the fabric of the community entirely. And so one of the things, too, that I think about, that is so unfortunate in our field, is that we don't really have research and development budgets. And if we do have an R&D type of budget, it often feels like the R becomes "risk," and the D becomes "dumpster fire." [LAUGHTER] Thank you. I'll be here all week. [LAUGHTER] But you know, I mean, we're laughing because it's funny because it's true. And we do need to take risks. And sometimes it feels like we're just creating a situation that could turn into a dumpster fire. But we all know that failure is part of the pathway to success.

So in that regard, I think it is critical to have leadership buy-in to begin with. And we all know how we have to use diplomatic language to make it a priority, even though a lot of the work that we all do in this room, within the education space especially, is the most mission-aligned work that happens in our organizations often. Often that's true. So I think finding the right language to make sure that you can bring leadership into the focus area, that this kind of partnership work really needs, is vital. And then really the staffing changes that happen. I think if we can really make sure that what we're doing is imprinting this work on the identity of our organization, it makes it a lot easier to ride out those staffing turnovers or the staffing changes. Because it is mission-critical.

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So yeah, I think the cultural infrastructure piece is really important. And then just risk and dumpster fire is a fun thing to hold in the back of your mind when you say "research and development."

WALTRIP: So I think for time to make sure we stay on track, I want to move to teaching artists' professional and musician involvement and how critical that is. And I was hoping you might start, Catherine, and help us define what is the difference between teaching artists and your run-of-the-mill professional musician? And then how do we define that in this work? And then why is it so important to involve these musicians in the planning?

BEESON: I love run-of-the-mill professional musicians. I could just imagine a conveyor belt. Okay. A teaching artist—First of all, before I TA-explain all of you, how many of you actually already know what a teaching artist is? Okay. Great. I think we've answered that question. No, I'm kidding. I'm really pleased that most of your hands went up. That's incredible. I think that the primary difference for me, anyway, between a teaching artist and a run-of-the-mill professional musician—

WALTRIP: You're never going to let me live that down.

BEESON: No, you're never going to live that down. It's really the commitment to process and to observation. And so teaching artists are deeply collaborative versions of professional musicians. We are much more interested in making sure that we're creating a space that lifts students into the work, rather than tells students about the work. That's the most basic overview possible. Teaching artists come in every kind of shape and size and structural element and can do things in incredibly creative ways. Your typical professional musician who does not engage in teaching artistry really is primarily focused on making sure that their execution and interpretation skills on their instrument or their voice is their primary focus.

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And there's nothing wrong with either one of those, but I think it's more enriching to be a teaching artist musician. And so that's my personal standpoint there. Was there a part B to that question?

WALTRIP: Why should they be involved in these ideas and creating these programs?

BEESON: Why should they be involved in creating these programs? I mean, it makes them better. So just selfishly, I want all of my colleagues to be teaching artists. They're more interesting when they take up this work. Are any of them in the room? No. Good. And then also, you know, you show a fuller version of what it is to be a professional musician, interpreter, collaborator when you engage in teaching artistry in front of literally anyone. So I think it just, it tells the story of why we all care so much about this and about the cultural infrastructure that we're creating. So that's why.

WALTRIP: I want to make sure we have time. Do either of you want to introduce the video before we hit?

WONG: Sure. I'll introduce the video. So this video is first and foremost—the caveat is that we created it for fundraising purposes. We didn't create it for the session, so we're definitely not pitching you on it on gifts. [LAUGHTER] But you can give, if you like. And here's my QR code. But what I would like to say, so in terms of our Orchestral Learning Alliance teaching fellows, the idea is to give them a really intensive experience during the time that they're visiting our HYS programs, whether it's during the Pacific Music Institute or during our other school year stuff. And so they basically spend about—anywhere from seven to ten days with us, and we create a really rigorous residency schedule in which they're going to a whole variety of community centers, schools, different grade levels, different types of schools.

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Some schools have music programs, others don't. Some kids have some background and knowledge of music or are playing instruments, and others don't—intergenerational centers, the whole gamut. And we really put them through a very intensive experience, with the goal of them having a chance to practice learning to be a teaching artist or as a teaching fellow. And so we have these partnerships with local chamber music organizations. Chamber Music Hawaii is one, and they have resident string quartet, wind quintet, and brass quintet. And so their performers are professional teaching artists, and they're going into schools across every island all throughout the year. And they're also all musicians of the Hawaii Symphony.

And so we figured that those folks are really great mentors for these teaching fellows. And so that's what this video is going to talk about.

[OLA VIDEO 2025 BEGINS]

SCERBO: One of the great things over the course of our partnership with the Hawaii Youth Symphony and the Pacific Music Institute has not only been the work that we do together in the summers, but now the opportunity for our NOI fellows to come and see HYS during their full season and participate in activities like The Island Tour and be with the HYS students in a deeper capacity and a more enriched capacity.

DASARA BETA: We have a brass quintet worth of NOI fellows plus Gabe Cruz from the Hawaii Symphony. And essentially what we're doing here is a lot of outreach. So we are doing a lot of quintet programming, seminars on success in college, whether it's for music or not, both on Oahu and on Maui.

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AIDEN KEISER: This fellowship experience has been one of the most incredibly rewarding things I think I've ever done in my life. Being able to just go to Hawaii and spend time with the students, I'm unimaginably grateful for this experience. It means the world to me.

MAESTRO JOSEPH STEPAC: And this is all about what HYS stands for. It's a way for us to foster growth through music.

GABE CRUZ: You know, you have your students of the youth symphony. You have professionals that are around and Maestro Stepac, myself, but then the bridge in between that, these students that are going to the best schools and sitting in. And you know, they're not that much older than the HYS students.

EMMA N.: And it's a really great experience to not only get to play with those musicians, but to meet these teachers and to learn.

BEN D'HAITI: I think it can be really helpful just to see people who are just at the next level or the next stage in life, kind of to see that as a model. I think that can be extremely helpful.

CRUZ: The youth orchestra experience was so valuable, so unforgettable, it's fulfilling for me, and I get to pay it forward.

IONA PAY: This is a highly applicable experience to the real world. I currently freelance in Los Angeles. And when you freelance, it's not just sitting up on a stage and playing with the brass section. A lot of it is actually creating opportunities for ensembles that you may work in and finding opportunities to connect with the community.

D'HAITI: Being a musician means teaching a lot. It means shopping a lot. It means playing a lot of chamber music. And we're doing all those things here. And we're also playing in an orchestra, so there's not a single skill that we do here in Hawaii that isn't directly translatable to our professional careers.

WONG: The more that we do to encourage students to have this growth, to be fully passionate and fully developed to their own personal excellence, the stronger they will be and the stronger our community will be as a whole.

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SCERBO: I'm not really aware of any two other organizations doing the type of work that NOI and HYS are doing. We're bringing together two leaders in the world of music education, one focusing on college students, one focusing on elementary, middle and high school students.

Even though we are thousands of miles away, we are working together to create a bold and bright future for musicians in this country.

[END OF VIDEO]

[APPLAUSE]

WALTRIP: Thanks for sharing that, Randy, and I'll probably make a donation. I want to make sure we have time for questions because there's a lot of content and a lot of panelists. If anybody has any questions, particularly about Colorado or Hawaii, or just how one goes about doing this or finding the financial resources, because we didn't get into that as much, but a lot of times it's really difficult to find sustainable funding sources for this kind of work. So I just want to make sure we have questions, and we'll get a mic to you in just a second.

MALE QUESTIONER: Yes, I know it's sometimes hard to track some of the people who you served, even anecdotally, but just given the fact that I'm assuming it's been seven years since you had launched this program, have you been able to keep in touch with any of these students, and have any of them kept up with the music and maybe even become professional musicians themselves?

WONG: Yes, I just want to clarify, are you asking about the students enrolled in our program, or are you asking about the teaching fellows who we bring to be part of it?

MALE QUESTIONER: The students.

WONG: Oh, yes, sure. We definitely track all of our students. It's a year-round, continuous program. So every year we graduate about 60 kids, and then they go on to college, and we have an alumni program.

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They annually earn about a million in financial aid and scholarships. That's what they self-report. So we think that that's a really good indicator as to how they're using music as a platform to be able to pay for college.

WALTRIP: Yes, similarly in Denver, we have the data, and a lot of the students are going into music. I would say a third go into music specifically, about a third double major, and a third do something totally different in their college careers. But yes, I would say we're seeing a lot of success from the scholarship and them getting into the schools of their choice, as well. Other questions? I see one in the back.

MALE QUESTIONER: This checklist is incredible for being able to deal with mission creep, because as the music director of a youth orchestra, I have so many people always wanting to be collaborators. I'm wondering if you can give a couple of examples of where you've run into maybe mission creep or something that seemed at first like something that would serve your mission, vision and values and then ended up being, "Oh, maybe this is a little bit too far away from our focus"?

WALTRIP: Really good question about mission creep. Does anybody want to tackle that? How you handled something that came to you that maybe wasn't quite the right fit?

WONG: Well, one way that I can talk to it is how we use the mission vision values to vet and make decisions about what types of collaborations we do. So, two interesting collaborations came our way this past year. One was a film producer, a filmmaker pitched us on a project. They were seeking a classical soundtrack for their film.

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And at first we were thinking, well, to what extent does it meet both our vision to make music a right and also to foster the fun and creative opportunities? So as we learned about the film, it was a film about 12-year-old Micronesian boys growing up in the Kalihi area of Oahu, which is a very highly impoverished area. And it's a story of grief and resilience, because this Micronesian community is often subjected to discrimination, lots of prejudice, bullying, hate crimes and so forth. And so it tells the story of these four friends who are coping with the suicide of their friend. And this is a story that was really unfamiliar to a lot of our students, and a community that's largely unfamiliar to our community.

But we thought that by commissioning a score from a composer of that Pacific Islander background that this could provide us with an opportunity to introduce the story and the issues to our community. And we could help to make music right by bringing classical music to an audience that would normally not be thinking about it as a way to tell stories. And so it became an opportunity for our youth to be almost like actors in the film, because they're telling the same story through their music. And so as we engaged our kids around why we were doing the film, they became more familiar with these issues in that community, and so it broke down a lot of the barriers to classical music.

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And in the process of doing that, we were able to develop—the film ended up going into a lot of film festivals, and it will be released later this summer on AMC and Sundance. But we were able to get the soundtrack out there. We got a record deal, and so we put it out in vinyl.

So that was cool. But really it's more about how much more awareness could we bring to this story of youth voices through music.

And so that collaboration could have been considered a mission group if it was just for the purpose of recording a soundtrack. But actually it really—we felt that it deeply connected with our vision and values. And so not to say that we shoehorned it in, but there's a way to use your mission vision and values to vet and really understand why it is that you're doing this. And so that was part of that decision.

WALTRIP: Carter, I want to make sure you get a chance to ask your question, and then we'll have final comments, if that works.

CARTER: Hi, everybody. It's a very basic question, but I wanted to hear what you did. These are so inspiring and just unbelievable programs that you've put together. And I also want to come back as Randy Wong. So the basic question is what did you find that resonated the most when you brought in the people that helped support it financially? What was the basic thing that really resonated with those people who gave you your money?

BEESON: Can I start by saying I also want to be Randy? I think certainly the partnership with DaVita with the healthcare company, because there's so much more emphasis now being placed finally on the alignment of just general health and welfare and what we do in the cultural sector.

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And to bring students into that light earlier and earlier in their understanding of what they are set up to do and how they are set up to positively affect people, whether they stay playing music or not. I think that has been a point of huge resonance.

WONG: Okay, so on the financial piece, it has evolved over time. So at first, we were just talking about youth development, and we're bringing more opportunities to more kids. But more recently, and it takes time for people to socialize with the idea of making music right. When we introduced it, it was so different for our community. And so over time, as we started talking about the teaching fellows and as we used the video and so forth, we started to hit on the idea of workforce development, because there aren't really a lot of training pathways for musicians who are so focused on the conservatory.

And of course, you could go and you can do like the Citizen Artist Program or the Music and Education Program that was at NEC. There are a whole bunch of them, but frankly, no one has time during the conservatory day to really have a very rigorous residency experience. And so as we developed the OLA teaching fellows, and OLA is also the Hawaiian word for

life, and orchestra is life for all of us. And so we just wanted to find a way to—we're helping to develop the workforce. So we started talking with our House Committee on Culture and the Arts, and they actually happened to be the same members of the House Committee on Labor. And it's just showing them that there's an intersection between arts and culture and creative workforce. And that we can get to it a little bit just because we're trying to make a difference for kids in the community.

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But I want to go back to that other question that you had about mission creep, which was another thing that we've heard. Do you guys know about Guy Kawasaki? He was one of the first Apple evangelists. So he's also from Hawaii, and he comes out, and he talks a lot, and he was saying about how we're always looking for the next curve, right? And so the idea is that in music, music touches so many different aspects of who we are, and so what is that next curve? Maybe it is workforce development. Maybe it is working in intergenerational populations. And so even if you're a youth orchestra, why can't you work with an elder population? And why can't you use your teaching fellow programs or your residencies or whatever to help you do that?

WALTRIP: Richard, any last thoughts?

SCERBO: Yes, I just want to get back to your question also about the financial piece. So one of the things that I found for the National Orchestral Institute, so we have this mission to train the next generation of orchestral musicians, but what we do consistently is talk about our partnerships and invite those people into our space to share those stories with our friends, donors, and superfans. And so just for example, Randy has presented at our gala multiple times. And what we found is that as we focus on our work, not just being about training the next generation, but being based in partnership, that our donors really enjoy that. And so every time we take the time to share these stories and do that sharing really authentically, we find people step forward and want to participate in that. So that has resulted in the last two years of a major donor stepping forward to help fund the collaboration that we have with the Hawaii Symphony, just as one example.

WALTRIP: Well, we have technically reached the end of our time, so I want to thank you for being here, for being engaged. I want to give a big round of applause to the panel for their time this morning as well.

[APPLAUSE]

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We are going to share the expanded slide deck that also has the version of the handout in the slides, if you didn't get a chance to get that. And I think we'd all be willing to stay here if you have specific questions, as well. And I think everybody is willing, if you want to reach out and learn more about something. Please contact us by email. That should also be in the handout. Thank you so much for being here. Have a great rest of your Conference.

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