



Orchestras Building Community Through Education and Engagement

A Report from the League of American Orchestras

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League
of American
Orchestras

New Bedford Symphony Orchestra musicians are often found in surprising community locations. Photo courtesy of New Bedford Symphony Orchestra.

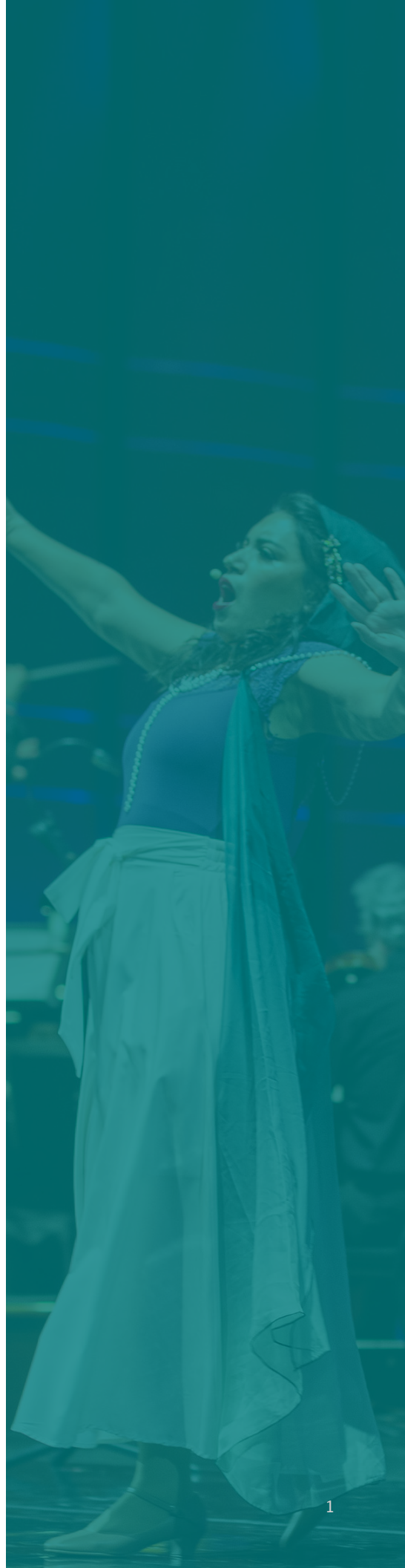


COVER PHOTO:
West Michigan Symphony's "Tune Up" program provides beginning string orchestra education for students with limited access to music education. Photo by Beth Buelow Photography.

Table of Contents

About This Report	2
Key Takeaways	3
2024-25 Season Snapshot	6
Goals	7
Engagement and Access	7
Range of Programs	8
Online Activities and Instruction	8
Partnerships	9
Venues	9
Workforce	10
Finances	11
Program Models	12
Responding to Local Context	13
Youth Orchestra Approaches	14
Widely Reported Adult Orchestra EdCE Models	17
Additional Adult Orchestra EdCE Program Models	20
Conclusions	29
Technical Notes.....	30
Survey Process and Participants.....	30
Treatment of Affiliated Youth Orchestra Data.....	31
Methodology for Program Models	32
Methodology for Field-Wide Estimates	32
Glossary	33
Survey Terminology.....	33
Acknowledgements	34

Through theatre, dance, music, and poetry, the Austin Symphony Orchestra presents a family-friendly adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* called "Midsummer in Marfa: A West Texas Fairy Tale. Photo by Misty Rae Photography.





An enthusiastic audience on the lawn at Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's Brady Block Party. Photo by JP Leong.



About This Report

Education, community engagement, and youth orchestra work have become central to how many orchestras serve their communities. Across the United States, orchestras are creating opportunities for learning, participation, artistic development, youth engagement, and connection through a remarkable diversity of programs and partnerships.

This report is based on responses from **100 adult orchestras** (including 45 with affiliated youth orchestras) and **28 independent youth orchestras** to an **Education, Community Engagement, and Youth Orchestra Survey** conducted by the League of American Orchestras in fall 2025. It presents a national picture of how orchestras are investing in this work and the organizational choices that inform their efforts in different communities.

The findings show that there is no single way to do this well. Every organization we heard from is responding to its own community, its own partners, its own capacity. What emerges is a field that's broad, adaptable, and valuable to the public it serves.



Key Takeaways



Boston Symphony Orchestra musicians pose with Conservatory Lab Charter School students following a Community Chamber Concert. Photo by Hilary Scott, courtesy of Boston Symphony Orchestra.

1 Education, community engagement, and youth orchestra work are major areas of orchestral activity, engaging millions of people of all ages each year.

Across the United States, an estimated **2,200 adult orchestras** and **400 youth orchestras** invest substantial resources in programs that support learning, participation, artistic development, youth engagement, and community connection.

During the 2024-25 season, we estimate that U.S. orchestras engaged **4.6 million** participants in **21,650** distinct education, community engagement, and youth orchestra concerts and events.¹

Youth orchestras alone engaged an estimated **82,240 young musicians** during this 2024-25 season.

2 Access is a defining feature of education and community engagement work.

Orchestras are lowering financial and geographic barriers to participation. As a result, in the 2024-25 season:

- 90% of participants in education and community engagement programs took part free of charge.
- 90% of education and community engagement activities took place in schools and other community settings, rather than concert halls.
- 18.6% of all youth orchestra participants (an estimated total of 15,300 young musicians) received either full or partial scholarships.

¹[Orchestras at a Glance](#)



The Symphony of the Mountains presents the culmination of its “Paths to Dignity” initiative, in a concert featuring bluegrass trio The Kruger Brothers, symphony musicians and chorus, and members of the regional unsheltered community. Photo by Dustin Miller Photography.

3 Through this work, orchestras function as community-engaged institutions, not simply concert presenters.

Education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activities take place largely beyond the concert hall, through schools, community organizations, healthcare settings, libraries, places of worship, and digital platforms. Partnerships are central to this work, helping organizations design, deliver, sustain, and modify programs in response to community needs and opportunities.

4 Organizations adapt their approaches to local circumstances.

The findings reveal a wide variety of approaches, ranging from educational concerts and small-ensemble performances to curriculum-based residencies, side-by-side programs, creative collaborations, and health and well-being initiatives. The most appropriate approach depends on local circumstances. Orchestras adapt to reflect community needs, participant feedback, partnerships, organizational capacity, and staff expertise.

5 Investing in education, community engagement, and youth orchestra work means investing in people.

The 78 orchestras reporting expenses collectively invested **\$72 million** in education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activity during the 2024-25 season.

Personnel costs account for 75% of these expenses for adult orchestra education, community engagement, and affiliated youth orchestra programs, and **57%** for independent youth orchestras. In addition to staff and teaching artists, half of all musicians in adult orchestras are involved in education and community engagement activities, and volunteers play an important role across many programs.

Earned revenue covers only 14% of education, community engagement, and affiliated youth orchestra expenses, and **60%** of independent youth orchestra expenses. This finding highlights the significant human and financial investment required to sustain this work, and underscores the importance of ongoing organizational, philanthropic, and public support.

ABOUT OUR TERMINOLOGY

This report distinguishes between two different types of youth orchestra:

- “Independent youth orchestra” refers to a stand-alone organization whose primary mission is to provide youth orchestra programs. We estimate that there are at least 277 independent youth orchestra organizations in the United States, collectively engaging around 69,250 young musicians.
- “Affiliated youth orchestra” refers to a youth orchestra program operated by, or formally affiliated with, an adult orchestra. We identified at least 123 affiliated youth orchestra programs nationwide, collectively serving an estimated 12,990 young musicians.

In this report we refer to “adult orchestras” in parallel with the term “youth orchestras.” An adult orchestra is a professional or community orchestra that is comprised mostly of adult musicians.

Education and Community Engagement (EdCE) refers to the closely related areas of education and community engagement programming, which are typically led by the same staff member or team within an orchestra. To reflect the overlap and integration of these areas of work, the acronym EdCE has become increasingly common within the orchestra field.

Definitions for other specialist terms we use are provided in the [Glossary](#) at the end of the report.

ABOUT THE DATA

Unless otherwise stated, the findings in this report draw on the **Education, Community Engagement and Youth Orchestra Survey 2025**, conducted by the League of American Orchestras in fall 2025. Responses were received from **100 adult orchestras** (including 45 with affiliated youth orchestras) and **28 independent youth orchestras**, representing organizations of every League budget group and from all regions of the United States. Together, these respondents represent approximately **21% of League member adult orchestras** and **29% of League member independent youth orchestras**.

Where indicated, the report also presents **field-wide estimates** based on data submitted through the League’s **2025 Orchestra Statistical Report (OSR)**. These estimates draw on data from **161 member orchestras** and are extrapolated to reflect the size and budget profile of the U.S. orchestra field using IRS Form 990 data.

Further information about the survey, estimation methods, and data analysis is provided in the [Technical Notes](#) at the end of the report.



The Philadelphia Young Artists Orchestra's Young Artists Solo Competition winner performs Elgar's Cello Concerto during a Festival Concert at the Kimmel Center. Photo by Bachrach Photography.



2024-25 Season Snapshot

Our 2024-25 Season Snapshot offers a picture of how orchestras are serving their communities through education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activity. It highlights the scale of this work, the wide range of approaches organizations employ, and the partnerships, people, and investments that make it possible.

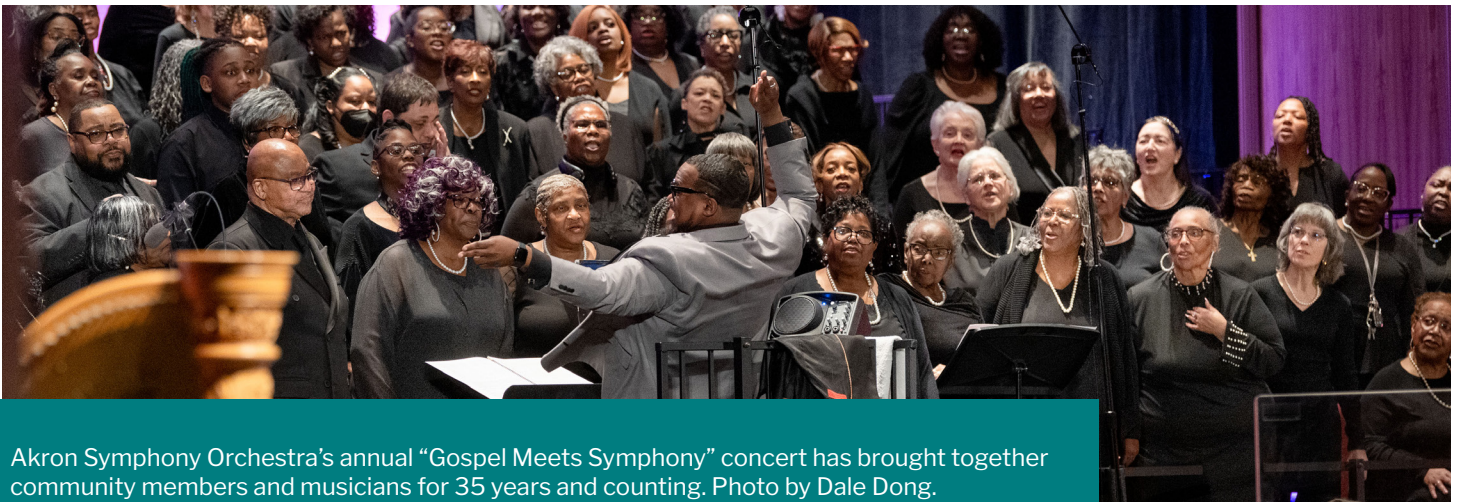
Throughout the report, youth orchestra work is presented separately from education and community engagement (EdCE) work wherever possible. Where data is combined, this reflects how participating organizations manage and record their work. Further information is provided in the [Technical Notes](#).

Goals

Across adult and youth orchestras, respondents identified a consistent set of priorities for this work. When asked to identify their top goals, they most frequently selected the following available response options:

- Expanding access to orchestral music
- Providing music education
- Expanding access to the arts
- Supporting youth engagement in their communities
- Increasing interest in orchestral music

These priorities provide important context for understanding the wide range of programs described later in this report. While organizations employ different approaches, many are ultimately working toward shared goals related to access, learning, participation, and youth engagement.



Akron Symphony Orchestra's annual "Gospel Meets Symphony" concert has brought together community members and musicians for 35 years and counting. Photo by Dale Dong.

Engagement and Access

Orchestras engage millions of people each year through education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activity. Across the United States, an estimated **2,200 adult orchestras** and **400 youth orchestras** invest substantial resources in programs that support learning, participation, artistic development, youth engagement, and community connection.

During the 2024-25 season, we estimate that U.S. adult orchestras engaged **4.6 million participants** through **21,650** education, community engagement, and affiliated youth orchestra concerts and events. Independent and affiliated youth orchestras together engaged an estimated **82,240** young musicians.

Among the 128 organizations responding to the survey, the median annual participation was:

- **Education and community engagement departments of adult orchestras: 14,000** audience members and participants.
- **Independent youth orchestras: 250** young musicians.
- **Affiliated youth orchestras: 130** young musicians.

Broad participation is supported by efforts to reduce financial barriers. Across responding adult orchestras, **90%** of education and community engagement participants take part free of charge. Among youth orchestras, scholarships also play an important role: an estimated **15,300** young musicians nationwide received full or partial scholarships during the 2024-25 season (20% of musicians in independent youth orchestras and 11% in affiliated youth orchestras).



Augusta Symphony musicians perform at the local VA Hospital's Blind Rehab Unit. Photo by Delaney Chesnick.

Range of Programs

Orchestras offer a wide range of programs for people of all ages in their communities. In fact, the 128 responding orchestras reported nearly 1,300 distinct education, community engagement, and youth orchestra programs² in the 2024-25 season. These included family and school concerts, curriculum-based residencies and youth orchestras, side-by-side programs, young composer initiatives, and small ensemble performances.

To better understand the nature of this work, survey respondents categorized education and community engagement programs as primarily either presentational or participatory.³

- Around two-thirds of 2024-25 programs were described as primarily **presentational**, focusing on providing access to live orchestral experiences. Examples include school, family, and community concerts, as well as small-ensemble performances in schools, libraries, healthcare settings, and neighborhood venues.

Presentational approaches often engage large numbers of people, leveraging orchestras' artistic and production expertise in order to broaden access to live music performance.”

- Roughly one-third⁴ were described as being primarily focused on **participation**, inviting people to engage directly in music-making. Examples include side-by-side programs, curriculum-based artist residencies, and many health and well-being programs.

Participatory approaches can create deeper opportunities for engagement, learning, and relationship-building. Because they often require additional teaching, coaching, and educational expertise, they are generally more resource-intensive than presentation-based approaches and engage fewer people.

Online Activities and Instruction

Digital offerings create ways for people to learn, connect, and participate beyond in-person settings.

- 48% of adult orchestras reported an online component to their Education and Community Engagement (EdCE) and affiliated youth orchestra programs.
- 57% of independent youth orchestras reported offering opportunities to engage online.

These options include both live virtual and hybrid instruction, as well as open access digital resources that support remote learning and participation.

²Defined as individual programs or series designed around specific goals and outcomes.

³Presentational programs engage participants primarily as listeners or audience members. Participatory programs involve active engagement as performers, composers, creators, or collaborators.

⁴Because programs could include both presentational and participatory elements, percentages may not total 100%.



Baton Rouge Symphony musicians play in the Louisiana Art and Science Museum Planetarium as a part of their “Concerts in the Cosmos” series. Photo courtesy of Baton Rouge Symphony.

Partnerships

Partnerships play a central role in how orchestras design and carry out their work in education and community engagement. Both adult and youth orchestras collaborate with a wide range of organizations, including schools, healthcare providers, houses of worship, museums, and music organizations representing diverse traditions and communities. These relationships often extend beyond basic coordination to include shared planning, delivery, staffing, and evaluation.

Many partnerships are sustained over time. Formal agreements such as memoranda of understanding or recurring contracts can serve as one indicator of longer-term commitment. The typical respondent reported three such partnerships, while only 17% reported none.

The partner types that survey respondents most often selected from a range of options were:

- K-12 Schools
- Colleges and universities
- Music programs (community music schools, youth music organizations, afterschool programs, etc.)
- Other nonprofit organizations

These findings highlight the extent to which education and community engagement work is built on long-term relationships with partner organizations. For many orchestras, partnerships are central to how programs are designed, delivered, and sustained.

Venues

90% of education and community engagement activities take place in schools or other community settings **outside the orchestra’s primary performance space.** As a result, participants often encounter these programs in familiar environments close to home.



Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra staff and volunteers provide pre-concert fun at one of the orchestra's Brady Block Parties. Photo by JP Leong.

Workforce

Orchestra musicians play an important role. On average, half of the regularly contracted musicians in an adult orchestra were involved in its education, community engagement, and/or affiliated youth orchestra activities during the 2024-25 season.

Musicians are joined by a broader workforce of specialist paid staff, teaching artists,⁵ and contractors. Across the 128 responding organizations, more than 3,700 professionals in these roles supported education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activity.

Median staffing levels per orchestra were:

- Adult orchestras (including any affiliated youth orchestras): 2 full-time staff and 23 part-time, contract, and teaching artist positions.
- Independent youth orchestras: 4 full-time staff and 22 part-time, contract, and teaching artist positions.

The expertise of these staff members extends beyond artistic and educational practice. Through sustained relationships with participants, schools, community organizations, and others beyond the orchestra, they develop deep knowledge of local needs, barriers, resources, and opportunities. One respondent described their role as providing the orchestra's "boots on the ground."

Long tenure helps make this possible: half of all survey respondents—typically education and community engagement leaders, or executive directors in smaller orchestras and independent youth orchestras—reported working in the field in both 2015 and 2025.

In addition to staff, teaching artists, and musicians, volunteers also make important contributions to this work:

- Adult orchestras and their affiliated youth orchestras: a median of 33 volunteers collectively contribute approximately 90 days of service annually.
- Independent youth orchestras: a median of 44 volunteers collectively contribute approximately 60 days of service annually.

⁵Teaching artists are professional practicing artists, generally not members of the orchestra, who are employed as educators, usually on part-time or project-based contracts.

Finances

Education and community engagement work represents a substantial organizational investment, sustained largely through contributed income. The 78 orchestras that reported their spending collectively invested over \$72 million in EdCE and youth orchestra activities during the 2024-25 season.

A large share of this investment supports the people who make this work possible. Many of the participatory, relationship-based, and partnership-based programs that orchestras identified as especially meaningful depend heavily on skilled staff, teaching artists, and orchestra musicians. Personnel expenses account for:

- **75%** of EdCE expenses for adult orchestras and affiliated youth orchestras⁶
- **57%** of total expenses for independent youth orchestras

Earned revenue, including ticket sales, tuition, and program fees, covers only part of the overall cost of this work. The role of earned revenue varies considerably, accounting for **60%** of independent youth orchestra expenses—driven largely by tuition revenue—but only **14%** of adult orchestra expenses for education and community engagement programs (including affiliated youth orchestras).

Average reported operating expense per participant:

- **Adult orchestra education and community engagement programs (including affiliated youth orchestras):** \$30, with \$4.30 covered by earned revenue.
- **Independent youth orchestras:** \$1,641, with \$971 covered by earned revenue (primarily through tuition fees).

The large difference in per-participant costs reflects, in part, the distinct nature of these activities. Education and community engagement programs often engage large numbers of participants through school and community-based initiatives, many of which are offered free of charge. Independent youth orchestras typically provide sustained, intensive musical instruction and ensemble experiences over longer periods of time, supported in significant part by tuition revenue.



Principal cellist Eri Snowden-Rodríguez performs in the Akron Symphony Orchestra's annual "Gospel Meets Symphony" concert. Photo by Dale Dong.

⁶Adult orchestra education and community engagement figures include activity delivered through affiliated youth orchestra programs. Because youth orchestra programs typically involve higher per-participant costs, the reported personnel costs and per-participant expenses are likely higher than they would be for education and community engagement programming alone. Readers should therefore exercise caution when comparing these figures.



Program Models



A high school mentor from Southeastern Minnesota Youth Orchestras leads beginning orchestra students in a small-group lesson. Photo courtesy of Southeastern Minnesota Youth Orchestras.

Responding to Local Context

One of the clearest themes emerging from the survey is that orchestras design education, community engagement, and youth orchestra programs in response to local context. Rather than following a single model of practice, organizations adapt their work to reflect community needs and interests, participant feedback, available partnerships, organizational capacity, and staff expertise.

Survey respondents identified the three strongest influences on programming decisions as:

- Ideas generated by education, community engagement, and youth orchestra personnel
- Participant input, feedback, and needs
- Community input, feedback, and needs

This emphasis on local context extends beyond individual programs. More than half of participating organizations reported having education, community engagement, or youth orchestra mission statements or objectives distinct from those of their affiliated adult orchestra, reflecting how often this work is guided by purposes specific to the participants and communities it serves.

Respondents repeatedly emphasized that the most appropriate approach depends on local circumstances. For example, in communities where high-quality music education is already widely available, orchestras may contribute most by addressing other needs. Organizations also described making choices based on staff expertise, partnerships, and available resources, recognizing that different approaches require different forms of organizational capacity to sustain over time.



A Virginia Symphony Orchestra musician coaches a student through the English horn solo in Dvořák's "New World Symphony" before a performance. Photo by Cara Carmichael.

Programs also evolve as circumstances change. Respondents described adapting their work in response to changing community needs, participant feedback, rising costs, shifts in demand, and evolving partnerships. Some initiatives were redesigned or expanded, while others were discontinued when they no longer met local needs.

The program models that follow were developed by identifying recurring themes across the programs that respondents themselves described as the ones they were most proud of and as having made the greatest difference.

They are not intended as a comprehensive classification of all education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activity, nor should they be understood as competing approaches or stages of progression. Rather, they illustrate different ways organizations pursue educational, artistic, developmental, and community goals. Indeed, many orchestras employ several approaches simultaneously, often combining elements of multiple models.

Where sufficient responses were available, quantitative data provides additional information about the staffing, finances, and goals associated with each approach.



Team Mozart (beginner) students in the Winston-Salem Symphony's P.L.A.Y. Music program start off a concert with their opening song before picking up their violins. Photo by J Farley Photography.

ADDITIONAL LEAGUE RESOURCES

Learn more about youth orchestras:
americanorchestras.org/learn/youth-orchestras/

Youth Orchestra Approaches

Across survey responses, two recurring orientations emerged, referred to here as Gateway Programs and Pathway Programs.⁷ Many organizations incorporate elements of both, either within a single program or across a broader portfolio of offerings.

Gateway Programs

Gateway Programs create entry points into orchestral music for young people who might otherwise have limited opportunities to access instrumental learning or ensemble participation. Many are designed not only to support musical development, but also broader goals such as confidence-building, academic engagement, and youth development.

Often delivered in partnership with schools, families, and community organizations, these programs typically feature free or low-cost participation, access to instruments, group instruction, ensemble experiences, and other supports designed to reduce barriers to involvement.

While some Gateway Programs serve as entry points into more advanced musical pathways, others are designed with participation itself as the primary goal.

Among organizations reporting this approach:

- The most frequently cited organizational goal is providing music education.
- The most commonly reported motivation for participants is the opportunity to play in an ensemble.
- On average, organizations reporting this model in 2024-25 had:
 - 673 participants per organization
 - 21 total staff per organization, including just one full-time staff member
 - 15 part-time staff working an average of 20 hours each per week
 - 1 teaching artist working an average of 5 hours per week
 - 40 volunteers

⁷The Gateway and Pathway labels were applied analytically by the authors, rather than used by survey respondents.



Together with professional wind quintet WindSync and Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Mariachi Los Pasajeros, the Houston Youth Symphony's Coda Music Program celebrates its tenth anniversary with a burst of community collaboration. Photo by Monica Hindmarsh.

Examples:

Houston Youth Symphony (TX), founded in 1946 as a “pathway” program, launched its Coda Music Program as a “gateway” program in 2015, in two schools with 50 students receiving free beginner group string instruction. Coda now serves eight schools in two school districts with over 200 participants. Houston Youth Symphony celebrated Coda’s tenth anniversary with a concert bringing together all eight Coda schools on stage with professional wind quintet WindSync as well as Mariachi Los Pasajeros from the Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.

Metropolitan Youth Symphony (OR), another “pathway” institution with some 15 ensembles, created its Music Access Program (MAP) as a “gateway” program to provide students in low-income communities access to music education. The Beginning Strings Program (BSP) gives students the experience they need to play in a Metropolitan Youth Symphony (MYS) ensemble, and the Beginning Strings Graduate Program provides a pathway through MYS for students who started in BSP. The Tuition Assistance Program ensures that 100% of the students who request and qualify for financial assistance receive that support.

Winston-Salem Symphony (NC) created P.L.A.Y. Music (Piedmont Learning Academy for Youth) in 2015, inspired by Venezuela’s El Sistema model and its emphasis on educating the whole child—head, heart, and hands. Today, more than 300 students from elementary through high school receive instruction and progress through five levels of ensemble. Students attending Title I schools receive free tuition. A study conducted by WolfBrown demonstrated the program’s positive impact on students’ social-emotional development and improvements in reading and math achievement.



Beginning strings students in the Winston-Salem Symphony's P.L.A.Y. Music program perform a successful first concert, after starting the year on paper violins. Photo by J Farley Photography.



The Philharmonic Orchestra from the Loudoun Symphony Youth Orchestras performs at Carnegie Hall as the grand finale of the Viennese Masters Orchestra Invitational. Photo by Ashley Brody Photography.

Pathway Programs

Pathway Programs support sustained musical development through progressively more advanced ensemble experiences. Participants typically move through structured levels of repertoire, coaching, and performance opportunities designed to support artistic growth over time.

Common features include audition-based placement, tiered ensembles, advanced performance opportunities, masterclasses, sectional coaching, tours, and collaborations with professional musicians or composers.

While some participants pursue advanced study or professional careers, these programs also serve many young people for whom high-level ensemble participation is itself a meaningful educational, artistic, and social experience.

Among organizations reporting this approach:

- The most frequently stated goal is expanding access to orchestral music.
- As with Gateway Programs, the most commonly reported participant motivation is the opportunity to play in an ensemble.
- On average, organizations reporting this model in 2024-25 had:
 - 320 participants per organization
 - 30 staff, including three full-time positions
 - 30 volunteers

Examples:

Florida Symphony Youth Orchestras (FL), offering eight ensembles, took its Tour Orchestra and Tour Jazz Band on a 12-day tour of Japan in June 2025. They performed side-by-side concerts with three different Japanese youth orchestras. Initially divided by language, students came to establish friendships through their shared musical experiences.

Loudoun Symphony Youth Orchestras (VA) are the cornerstone of Loudoun Symphony’s educational program. Loudoun Symphony Youth Orchestras (LSYO) offer four levels from beginning to advanced, and all musicians are expected to perform in their school orchestras and bands if offered. In spring 2025, LSYO’s Philharmonic Orchestra traveled to New York to participate in a festival at Carnegie Hall. Requiring extra fundraising and rehearsal, the tour was a major undertaking that raised LSYO’s visibility and built students’ pride.

Widely Reported Adult Orchestra EdCE Models

The examples that follow illustrate a range of education and community engagement approaches currently employed by adult orchestras. Together, they highlight the different ways organizations pursue educational, artistic, developmental, and community goals.

ADDITIONAL LEAGUE RESOURCES

Learn more about education and community engagement:
americanorchestras.org/learn/education-and-community-engagement/



Community comes together for music, fun, and laughter at the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's Brady Block Parties. Photo by JP Leong.

Full Orchestra Programs

Full Orchestra Programs create shared live orchestral experiences designed for educational or community engagement purposes. For many participants, they provide a rare opportunity to experience the power, scale, and artistry of a full symphony orchestra in person.

Often designed for families, students, or other targeted audiences, these programs may incorporate educational framing, audience interaction, curriculum-linked learning, or accessible pricing models. They take place in a wide variety of settings, from concert halls to schools, parks, and community venues.

As a presentation-oriented approach, full orchestra programs can engage large numbers of participants while broadening access to live orchestral experiences.

About Full Orchestra Performances for Learning and Engagement:

- Their most frequently stated goal is expanding access to orchestral music.
- Respondents most often believed participants were motivated by learning or the chance to experience something new.
- On average, orchestras reporting this model in 2024-25 had:
 - 14,200 participants per organization, with 93% attending free of charge
 - 13.5 total EdCE staff (full-time, part-time, and contract)
 - 36 volunteers
 - EdCE operating expenses of \$220,000
 - 40 EdCE activities annually
 - 80% of concerts taking place in community venues beyond the orchestra's primary performance space

Examples:

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (MO) responded to a devastating tornado that left many unsheltered by giving a benefit concert in collaboration with another community arts organization, the Fabulous Fox. Admission was pay-what-you-wish, with proceeds donated to the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Disaster Relief Fund.

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's (OH) Brady Block Parties bring the sounds of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (CSO) into neighborhood settings. Each Brady Block Party is created in partnership with local community organizations. The festivities and food are all free for participants, and each event ends with an hour-long full-orchestra concert.

Boise Philharmonic (ID) reached 7,000 third to sixth graders with its School Concert series. These free performances are where the orchestra reaches the most youth, increasing access to the arts.

Tulsa Symphony Orchestra (OK) implements Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute Link Up program, involving nearly 120 schools and over 13,000 students and teachers, thanks to Carnegie Hall's extensive resources. The program structures interactions with teachers and students and provides work for Tulsa Symphony Orchestra musicians.



Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra celebrates Pride at an annual Brady Block Party. Photo by JP Leong.

Small Ensemble Programs

Small Ensemble Programs bring live orchestral music into schools, libraries, healthcare settings, community venues, and other spaces where participants live, learn, and gather. While full orchestra programs offer the power and scale of a symphony orchestra, small ensemble programs often create opportunities for more personal interaction, conversation, and connection.

These programs may focus on performance, demonstration, discussion, or interactive learning, and can often be adapted for specific audiences and settings. Some are designed for very young children, neurodivergent listeners, or other groups whose needs may be difficult to accommodate in a traditional concert environment.

For many orchestras, small ensemble programs provide a flexible way to extend their reach while creating intimate musical experiences and meaningful connections with participants.

About Small Ensembles for Learning and Engagement:

- The most frequently stated goal is to expand access to orchestral music.
- On average, orchestras reporting this model in 2024-25 had:
 - 12,000 participants, with 96% participating free of charge
 - 16 EdCE staff, including one full-time position
 - Personnel expenses accounting for 75% of the organization's EdCE budget
 - 12.5 volunteers, each contributing an average of two hours annually
 - 97% of activity taking place in community venues beyond the orchestra's primary performance space
 - Annual earned revenue of \$22,000, generated through ticket sales and/or by fees paid to the orchestra by host community partners



At a Portland Symphony Orchestra KinderKonzert, musicians lead Kindergarten-3rd Grade students in “Song Soup!”
Photo courtesy of Portland Symphony Orchestra.

Examples:

Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra's (MI) In Your Community brings Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra (KSO) musicians to rural communities outside Kalamazoo, creating partnerships with students and community members to work on an artistic project with the goal of forming long-term connections between the KSO and local student artists.

Portland Symphony Orchestra (ME) has rebuilt its KinderKonzert program which had pivoted to an entirely recorded virtual platform during the pandemic. KinderKonzerts bring narrated trio and quintet performances to schools and communities across Maine and New Hampshire, working with music educators to serve their curricular needs. The program has grown from 11 concerts in 2022-23 to 60 concerts in 2024-25 and now reaches over 10,500 students per year. Between grants, donations, and ticket sales, the program covers its own costs.

Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program (NM) sends seven of its student ensembles to public elementary and middle schools to perform at student assemblies. For over 30 years these events have helped sustain school music programs and Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program's own recruitment. Many students attending these concerts have never heard a live orchestra before, much less an orchestra comprised of other students.



Partners Mariachi Las Alteñas and the Austin Symphony Orchestra merge classical music and mariachi (alongside ballet and Shakespeare) to the delight of local students. Photo by Misty Rae Photography.

Additional Adult Orchestra EdCE Program Models

The models below were reported less frequently, but they illustrate additional ways orchestras design education and community engagement work in response to specific goals, audiences, or contexts.

Creative Community Collaborations

Creative Collaborations bring orchestras together with community participants, organizations, and artists to co-create new artistic work. Rather than engaging communities solely as audiences or participants in a pre-existing program, these initiatives invite them to help shape the artistic experience itself.

Programs may blend orchestral music with cultural traditions, artists, or ensembles that are important to the communities involved. They may include artist residencies, commissions, or collaborations with community choirs, bands, or other local performers.

By bringing together different perspectives, experiences, and artistic traditions, these collaborations create opportunities for cultural exchange, shared ownership, and creative expression.

Examples:

Quad City Symphony Orchestra (IA) took the occasion of performances of *Omar's Journey* by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels to engage with community leaders at the Friends of MLK Interpretive Center, Azubuike Council for the Arts, Muslim Community of the Quad Cities, the Islamic Center of the Quad Cities, multiple local school districts, and organizations such as the Cultural Diversity Club. Conversations focused on building trust, sharing the significance of the work, and listening to how the orchestra could make the concert experience more welcoming. These efforts led to strong attendance and laid the groundwork for ongoing relationships now informing this and future season's programming, including this past November's performance of Billy Childs's saxophone concerto, *Diaspora*.

Austin Symphony Orchestra (TX) premiered "*Midsummer in Marfa: A West Texas Fairy Tale*" for its school concerts, combining Mendelssohn's music for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with music arranged by Federico Chávez-Blanco—elements of mariachi, reggaeton, Latin dance, and more. The production increased student engagement and aligned with local curricula.



Songwriting and recording through the Oregon Symphony's Lullaby Project provide opportunities for creativity and connection for young people facing significant challenges. Photo courtesy of the Oregon Symphony.

Examples, continued:

Seattle Symphony (WA) built a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to shape programming around its live-to-film performances of Marvel's *Black Panther*. The CAB developed a broad range of community events, including a free conversation and performance with Massamba Diop, the talking drum performer featured in the film. Pre-performance events included an African print fashion show, Afrofuturism-focused spoken word performances by youth scholars paired with a local lecturer, and a Movement and Connectivity workshop with live dancing and drumming that invited concert attendees to participate while introducing them to traditional West African rhythms.

Oregon Symphony (OR) has worked with teams at Path Home Family Village (serving families living in homelessness) and the Family Preservation Project (serving women incarcerated at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility) to bring The Lullaby Project to Portland. Conceived by Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, The Lullaby Project uses the creative process of songwriting to improve well-being and child bonds with parents experiencing housing insecurity and other challenging life situations. Musicians from the Oregon Symphony and local singer-songwriters partner with parents and parents-to-be to create personal lullabies for their children, expressing their hopes and dreams for the future.



Oregon Symphony musicians, local singer-songwriters, and families navigating homeless or incarceration present a joyful Community Concert as part of The Lullaby Project. Photo by Jason Quigley.

Curriculum-Driven In-School Residencies

Curriculum-Driven In-School Residencies integrate orchestral music into classroom learning, often connecting music with broader curricular areas such as literacy, science, or social studies. Developed in partnership with K-12 educators, these programs bring orchestral learning directly into the school day.

Unlike one-off workshops or performances, residencies emphasize sustained engagement over time, with teaching artists returning to the same students across multiple sessions. Instruction typically combines accessible instrumental learning with creative, participatory activities, and many programs culminate in a live orchestral performance that connects classroom learning with the concert experience.

Because they unfold over multiple sessions, these programs typically involve a greater commitment of time and resources than one-time performances or workshops.

By building musical learning into existing educational settings, these programs create opportunities for sustained participation, creative expression, and deeper connections between students and orchestral music.



San Diego Symphony musicians visit local public schools, engaging students with free, standards-aligned music education programs. Photo by Jenna Gilmer.

Example:

San Diego Symphony (CA) delivers free, high-quality, standards-aligned music education for students across San Diego County, with the goal that every student experiences live music with the San Diego Symphony by the end of fifth grade. Developed in partnership with an Educator Advisory Committee of classroom and music teachers, the program serves grades 3-5 through an 8- to 10-week curriculum that builds musical literacy, social-emotional skills, and a sense of belonging. Components include professional-development workshops, interactive classroom lessons with video resources featuring San Diego Symphony musicians, chamber ensemble school visits, and a culminating full-orchestra concert at Jacobs Music Center or via livestream. More than 10,200 students participate at 103 schools, 47% of them Title I. Demographics reflect the diversity of the region, including students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, English learners, and those experiencing homelessness.

ADDITIONAL LEAGUE RESOURCES

Learn more about music education advocacy:
americanorchestras.org/learn/advocate/music-education-advocacy/



Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's annual Sensory Friendly Concert provides a much-needed space for families with sensory needs to enjoy live music. Photo by Jonathan Kirn.

Music for Health and Well-Being

As evidence grows of music's profound impact on health and well-being, orchestras are increasingly recognizing the potential to lead in this space.

In response, orchestras have developed programs specifically designed to support health and well-being in clinical, care, and community settings. Created in partnership with healthcare professionals and community organizations, these initiatives bring live music into hospitals, residential facilities, and other environments where well-being is an explicit focus.

Related approaches include sensory-friendly concerts for neurodivergent audiences and performances designed to support mindfulness practices such as yoga or meditation.

Together, these programs illustrate how orchestras are adapting musical experiences to meet the needs of specific audiences, creating opportunities for comfort, connection, inclusion, and well-being through music.

ADDITIONAL LEAGUE RESOURCES

Catalyst Guide: Orchestras in Health and Wellness
americanorchestras.org/catalyst-guide-orchestras-in-health-and-wellness/



Madison Symphony Orchestra's HeartStrings connects local seniors with live classical music at one of their community events. Photo by Chris Fiol.

Examples:

Madison Symphony Orchestra's (WI) HeartStrings® is a music therapy-informed program that brings live, interactive presentations by some of the Madison Symphony Orchestra's best musicians into healthcare and residential facilities. HeartStrings sessions have demonstrated extraordinary physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes for people of all ages and levels of functioning, reaching nearly 3,200 individuals each season.

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's (WI) annual Sensory Friendly Concert involves multiple community partnerships, attracts funding, and has support and buy-in from musicians, staff, board, and volunteers. It includes a specially curated concert, customized pre-concert activities, and a resource fair that includes other arts and culture organizations and social service agencies. It also features actors from the disability community. Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra also offers sensory aids, quiet spaces, and staff with at least basic training available for every public event held at the Bradley Symphony Center, in addition to other aids such as an embedded T-coil system, listening assistance devices, and braille and large print programs.



Discovering the clarinet at Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's annual Sensory Friendly Concert. Photo by Jonathan Kirn.



The Harrisburg Symphony Youth Orchestra, side-by-side with some members of the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, perform Carnegie Hall's *Link Up: The Orchestra Sings!* for nearly 1,400 elementary students in grades 3-8. Photo courtesy of Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra.

Side-By-Sides

Side-by-Side Programs bring students or amateur musicians into rehearsal and performance alongside professional orchestra members, with students often sharing music stands with the professionals and participating fully in the orchestra experience.

Rather than focusing on long-term progression, these initiatives offer participants the opportunity to experience orchestral music from the inside: rehearsing, collaborating, and sometimes performing alongside professional musicians.

Often developed in partnership with schools, youth orchestras, or affiliated ensembles, these programs frequently culminate in celebratory public performances that highlight both artistic achievement and the shared experience of music-making.



The de La Bruyère Youth Symphony of the Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's finds common ground with professional Orchestra of St. Luke's musicians in a side-by-side concert. Photo by DeShaun Craddock.

Examples:

Orchestra of St. Luke's (NY) in New York City performed its first side-by-side with the Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's (YOSL) in YOSL's 11th year and Orchestra of St. Luke's 50th year. Director of Education and Community Engagement Andrew Roitstein says that seeing students progress from their formative years to playing advanced repertory alongside professionals is “a reminder of the time that it takes to develop not only musicians, but communities of families, educators, and musicians.”

Akron Symphony Orchestra (OH) in spring 2026 held its second Sit In With The Symphony, a relaxed rehearsal where adult amateur musicians play through repertory alongside the professionals. They experience the onstage view of the orchestra's primary performance space, and the leadership of Music Director Christopher Wilkins. Participants pay a small fee, and their friends and families attend for free. Typical participant responses include, “It was inspiring, welcoming, and so much fun to play alongside musicians of this caliber,” and “One of the most enjoyable musical experiences I've had.”

Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra (PA) performed its Link Up concerts this year as a side-by-side with Harrisburg Symphony Youth Orchestra (HSYO). HSYO was the main performing ensemble, side-by-side with 20 musicians from the adult Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of HSYO Music Director Gregory Woodbridge.

Young Composer Programs

Young Composer Programs invite young people to create their own music, often regardless of prior compositional experience. These programs typically emphasize creativity, experimentation, and personal expression, with technical instruction introduced in ways that support the creative process. Opportunities to hear student work performed—whether by peers, teaching artists, orchestra musicians, or the full orchestra—are often a defining feature of the experience.

Programs may serve a wide range of ages and experience levels. In some cases, introductory creative experiences develop into mentorship, advanced study, or pre-professional opportunities for older students with a growing interest in composition.

By positioning young people as creators as well as performers and listeners, these programs create opportunities for artistic exploration, self-expression, and creative ownership.

Examples:

Tucson Symphony Orchestra's (AZ) Young Composers Project provides students ages 8 to 18 with the opportunity to compose for string quartet, brass quintet, wind quintet, or full orchestra. The program culminates in the Young Composers Festival, where last year over 30 works were premiered. Attendees comment on the impressive quality of the students' work. This program, now in its 34th year, highlights students in the community and their artistic contributions.

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SD) Music Composition Academy gives teens from Indigenous communities the opportunity to compose works for string quartet or wind quintet, to rehearse with South Dakota Symphony Orchestra musicians, and to present live performances of their works to their peers. For more information about this program, watch an [On-Demand League Webinar on Youth Engagement and the Future of Orchestras](#).

Helping teens from Indigenous communities compose original music through the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's Music Composition Academy. Photo courtesy of South Dakota Symphony Orchestra.





Florida Symphony Youth Orchestras members build international friendships on their 12-day tour of Japan. Photo courtesy of Florida Symphony Youth Orchestras.

Youth Leadership Development Programs

Drawing on approaches commonly used in youth development settings, these programs focus on building leadership, collaboration, confidence, and decision-making skills among young participants. Young people may take on roles in program planning, governance, peer mentorship, or event design, often over sustained periods.

Rather than engaging young people solely as participants, these initiatives invite them to contribute to organizational life and help shape programs, events, and performances through their own perspectives and leadership.

Example:

Southeastern Minnesota Youth Orchestras (MN) launched a mentorship program in which high-school-age musicians teach beginning 6th grade orchestra students at Dakota Middle School in Rochester. Teaching small groups of up to four students, mentors focus on technique while also helping with their orchestra exercises and repertoire. The program gives many younger students their first private instruction and inspires them with older peers who are invested in instrumental music. High school mentors gain valuable teaching and leadership experience as they give back to their community.

ADDITIONAL LEAGUE RESOURCES

Catalyst Guide: Youth Engagement and the Future of Orchestras
americanorchestras.org/catalyst-guide-youth-engagement-and-the-future-of-orchestras/



Conclusions

Across the United States, orchestras are investing significant resources in education, community engagement, and youth orchestra activity, working through extensive networks of schools, community organizations, healthcare providers, cultural institutions, families, volunteers, musicians, teaching artists, and staff. Together, these activities represent a substantial investment in learning, participation, artistic development, youth engagement, and community connection.

One of the clearest emerging findings is that education, community engagement, and youth orchestra work take many forms. Some approaches prioritize broad access to live orchestral experiences. Others emphasize active participation, sustained learning, artistic development, collaborative creation, health and well-being, or youth development.

Organizations pursue different goals through different approaches, each with their own strengths and demands. And the resulting work is central to how many organizations understand their public role. For orchestra leaders, the key is not to make value judgments about which approach is “best,” but instead to align programmatic choices with mission, specific local community needs, organizational capacity, and strategic priorities.

Another important finding is that investing in education, community engagement, and youth orchestra work means making a sustained investment in people. Across all forms of this work, organizations invest in musicians, teaching artists, administrative staff, volunteers, community partners, and others whose expertise and relationships enable meaningful engagement. Sustaining these contributions requires ongoing organizational, philanthropic, and public support. Without that investment, programs and the relationships they foster may be difficult to sustain; and where communities have come to rely on these programs, their discontinuation may be harmful.

For funders, policymakers, and community partners, the findings highlight not only the breadth of ways orchestras contribute to public life, but also the need for intentional and sustained investment. Earned revenue covers only a small part of the cost. Building broad participation—particularly where programs are free, low-cost, relationship-based, or designed for specific communities—requires continued philanthropic, public, and institutional support.

As expectations, communities, and artistic possibilities continue to evolve, EdCE and youth orchestra work will remain critical ways through which orchestras build relationships, create opportunities for participation, and contribute to community life. The forms this work takes may differ from one organization to another, and that diversity of approaches is one of the orchestra field’s defining strengths.

Sit In With the Symphony! Adult amateur musicians join Akron Symphony Orchestra musicians for a relaxed rehearsal. Photo by James Buckey / Akron Symphony Orchestra.



Students exit buses for School Concerts with the San Diego Symphony at Jacobs Music Center. Photo by Gary Payne.

Technical Notes

Survey Process and Participants

In fall 2025, the League of American Orchestras invited its 596 U.S.-based member orchestras to participate in the EdCE and Youth Orchestra Survey 2025.

The survey received responses from 100 adult orchestras (21% of League member adult orchestras) and 28 independent youth orchestras (29% of League member independent youth orchestras). Of the adult orchestras, 45 also reported operating an affiliated youth orchestra (see [Acknowledgements](#) for the full list of participating organizations).

The survey was developed with input from an Advisory Group comprising League staff and leaders from both adult and youth orchestras. To reflect different organizational structures, separate question tracks were developed for:

- Executive directors of adult orchestras with a dedicated EdCE leader
- Executive directors of adult orchestras without a dedicated EdCE leader
- Education and community engagement leaders at adult orchestras
- Executive directors of independent youth orchestras

In total, 159 individuals responded, with some organizations represented by more than one respondent in different roles.

Larger-budget orchestras are somewhat better represented in the dataset than smaller- and medium-budget orchestras. As with many surveys, this likely reflects the staffing capacity required both to sustain extensive education and community engagement work and to complete a detailed survey.

League Budget Group	League Member Orchestras	Survey Respondents	Response Rate
Group 1 (\$21.85 million and up)	32	19	59%
Group 2 (\$8 million to \$21.85 million)	24	10	42%
Groups 3-4 (\$2.45 million to \$8 million)	70	26	37%
Groups 5-6 (\$775,000 to \$2.45 million)	118	31	26%
Groups 7-8 (below \$775,000)	238	14	6%
Adult orchestras (total)	482	100	21%
Independent Youth Orchestras	96	28	29%

In addition to role-specific questions, the survey included questions about youth orchestra activity and, where relevant, changes observed by respondents who had worked in this field ten years earlier. Participants were asked to report data for the 2024-25 season using multiple-choice, rating-scale, ranking, numerical, percentage-estimate, and open-ended narrative questions.

To avoid over-interpreting limited data, the report excludes findings based on responses from fewer than 60% of eligible respondents. Aggregate figures include only organizations responding to the relevant question.

Unless otherwise stated, references to “average” or “typical” organizations refer to median values, which are less affected by extreme outliers than arithmetic means.



Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program's Junior Symphony performs for local elementary school students. Photo courtesy of Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program.

Treatment of Affiliated Youth Orchestra Data

When adult orchestras operated affiliated youth orchestras, survey questions were designed to reflect how education, community engagement, and youth orchestra records are commonly managed and recorded within organizations.

As a result:

- **Participant numbers** for education and community engagement programs and affiliated youth orchestras are reported separately.
- **Financial, workforce, volunteer, partnership, and organizational data** reported by adult orchestras generally include affiliated youth orchestra activity. Because these activities are often managed through shared budgets, staffing, volunteers, and partnerships, respondents were not asked to separate affiliated youth orchestra data from other education and community engagement activity.
- **Program characteristics**, including the number of education and community engagement activities and their classification (for example, presentational or participatory), refer only to education and community engagement activity.
- **Opinion and qualitative-response questions** invited respondents to reflect on their organization's education, community engagement, and affiliated youth orchestra work as a whole. These findings should therefore be understood as representing the combined perspective across these closely connected areas of activity.



A young concertgoer laughs and claps along during the Cincinnati Pops' Lollipops Family Concerts designed for young people. Photo by Mark Lyons.

Methodology for Program Models

Participants were asked to describe one education, community engagement, or youth orchestra program from the 2024-25 season that they were particularly proud of and believed had made a meaningful difference. They then answered ten additional questions about that same program.

Responses were reviewed to identify recurring approaches, which were grouped into the program models presented in this report. Because many respondents described programs spanning more than one approach, organizations may appear within up to two program models.

Where quantitative data are presented, they describe the broader education, community engagement, or youth orchestra activity of organizations associated with each model rather than the featured program itself. To avoid overinterpreting small samples, quantitative metrics are presented only for models with at least 12 respondents.

The program examples accompanying each model are adapted from respondents' original narrative submissions, edited for clarity and length, and reviewed and approved by the respondents. Although survey responses were collected on a confidential and unattributed basis, respondents gave separate permission for these adapted examples to be included in this report.

Methodology for Field-Wide Estimates

The report includes a small number of field-wide estimates based on data from the League's [Orchestra Statistical Report \(OSR\)](#). These estimates draw on responses from the **161 League member orchestras** that submitted OSR data for the 2024-25 season.

To estimate activity across the U.S. orchestra field, this data was extrapolated to reflect the size and budget profile of an estimated **2,200 adult orchestras**. This estimate began with organizations classified under NTEE Code A69 (Symphony Orchestras) in IRS Form 990 filings and was expanded through a keyword search of organizations classified under NTEE Codes A20 (Arts and Culture), A25 (Arts Education), A60 (Performing Arts), and A68 (Music), which identified orchestras filing under those broader categories.

Organizations that did not meet our definition of an orchestra were removed following individual review. The resulting population was grouped by budget size, and OSR data was weighted to match this profile, producing field-wide estimates that reflect variation across different sizes of orchestra.

National participation by independent youth orchestras was estimated by multiplying the estimated 277 independent youth orchestra organizations, identified through IRS Form 990 data, by the average participation reported in our survey.

Glossary

Independent youth orchestra refers to a stand-alone organization whose primary mission is to provide youth orchestra programs. There are at least 277 of these independent youth orchestras in the United States.

Affiliated youth orchestra refers to a youth orchestra program operated within, or formally connected to, an adult orchestra. We know of at least 123 of these affiliated youth orchestras nationwide.

Education and Community Engagement (EdCE) refers to closely related areas of programming, typically delivered by the same staff lead or team. The acronym EdCE has become increasingly common in the orchestra field since the 1970s, when education and community engagement began to significantly expand.

Teaching Artist refers to a professional practicing artist, generally not a member of the orchestra, who is employed as an educator, usually on part-time or project-based contracts.



Getting ready for Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's annual Sensory Friendly Concert. Photo by Jonathan Kirn.

Survey Terminology

Activity: “Any interaction (rehearsal, event, lesson, etc.) organized as part of your EdCE and/or youth orchestra work, including any repeats of the same event or program but for a different audience.”

Community partner: “A partner organization that shares some aspect of the programming work, such as recruitment, logistics, evaluation, program design, staffing, etc.”

Diversity: “We invite you to define ‘diversity’ along whatever parameters make sense within the scope of your organization’s EdCE and/or youth orchestra work and goals.”

Participants: “The individuals for whom the primary benefit is participation, and for whose benefit the EdCE and/or youth orchestra program is being organized.”

Program: “A recurring or one-off offering with a defined goal, audience, and content.”

Youth orchestra: “An educational organization providing a quality musical experience primarily for the study of the symphonic repertoire for young musicians. Youth orchestras may operate as independent organizations or be affiliated with adult orchestras or other institutions.”

The de La Bruyère Youth Symphony of the Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's and the Orchestra of St. Luke's perform a side-by-side concert, sharing music across generations. Photo by DeShaun Craddock.



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Survey Participants:

Adult Orchestras (with affiliated youth orchestras in parentheses)

- Akron Symphony Orchestra (Akron Youth Symphony; Akron Youth Philharmonic)
- Albany Symphony
- Alhambra Orchestra
- Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra
- Artis—Naples (Naples Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Aspen Music Festival and School
- Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Austin Symphony Orchestra
- Bangor Symphony Orchestra (Bangor Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Billings Symphony (Billings Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Binghamton Philharmonic
- Boise Philharmonic Association, Inc. (Boise Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Boston Philharmonic Orchestra (Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Boston Symphony Orchestra
- Bozeman Symphony Society
- Bremerton WestSound Symphony
- Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
- Canton Symphony Orchestra (Canton Youth Symphonies)
- Cayuga Chamber Orchestra (Cayuga Chamber Orchestra Youth Orchestra)
- Charlotte Symphony (Charlotte Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Charlottesville Symphony
- Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Columbus Symphony Orchestra
- Conway Symphony Orchestra
- Dallas Symphony Orchestra (Kim Noltemy Young Musicians Program; Young Strings)
- Detroit Symphony Orchestra (Detroit Symphony Youth Orchestra; Civic Youth Ensembles)
- Erie Philharmonic (Erie Junior Philharmonic)
- Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra (Evansville Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Excelsior Symphony Orchestra
- Georgia Symphony Orchestra (Georgia Youth Symphony Orchestra)
- Glens Falls Symphony
- Grand Rapids Symphony (Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra)
- Greenville Symphony Orchestra
- Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra (Harrisburg Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Hershey Symphony Orchestra
- Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra
- Holland Symphony Orchestra (Holland Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Houston Symphony (In Harmony)
- Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (Metropolitan Youth Orchestra)
- Jackson Symphony Orchestra (Jackson Youth Symphony Orchestra)
- Jacksonville Symphony (Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Johnstown Symphony Orchestra (Johnstown Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
- Kansas City Symphony
- Knoxville Symphony Orchestra (Knoxville Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- La Porte County Symphony Orchestra
- Lake Placid Sinfonietta
- Lansing Symphony Orchestra
- Los Angeles Philharmonic (YOLA - Youth Orchestra Los Angeles)
- Loudoun Symphony (Loudoun Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Louisville Orchestra
- Madison Symphony Orchestra
- Maryland Symphony Orchestra (Maryland Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
- Mobile Symphony Orchestra (Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Nashville Symphony
- National Repertory Orchestra
- New Bedford Symphony Orchestra (Southeastern Massachusetts Youth Orchestras)
- New England Philharmonic
- New Haven Symphony Orchestra
- Oakland Symphony
- Oklahoma City Philharmonic
- Omaha Symphony

- Orchestra of St. Luke's (Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's)
- Oregon Symphony
- Paducah Symphony Orchestra (PSO Academy Honors Orchestra)
- Pasadena Symphony and Pops (Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestras)
- Pensacola Symphony Orchestra (Pensacola Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
- Portland Symphony Orchestra
- Princeton Symphony Orchestra (partnerships with Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra and Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey)
- Quad City Symphony Orchestra (Quad City Symphony Youth Ensembles)
- Reno Philharmonic (Reno Philharmonic Youth Orchestras)
- Rochester Symphony Orchestra and Chorale
- Rockford Symphony Orchestra (Rockford Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera
- San Diego Symphony
- Saratoga Orchestra of Whidbey Island
- Savannah Philharmonic (Savannah Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Seattle Symphony
- South Carolina Philharmonic (South Carolina Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Spartanburg Philharmonic (Spartanburg Philharmonic Youth Orchestra)
- Springfield Symphony Orchestra
- St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- Summermusik
- Terre Haute Symphony Association
- The Cleveland Orchestra (The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra)
- Toledo Symphony
- Tucson Symphony Orchestra
- Tulsa Symphony Orchestra, Inc.
- Utah Symphony | Utah Opera
- Valdosta Symphony Orchestra (Valdosta Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Victoria Symphony
- Virginia Symphony Orchestra
- Walla Walla Symphony (Walla Walla Symphony Youth Orchestra)
- West Michigan Symphony
- Wichita Symphony Orchestra (Wichita Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Winston-Salem Symphony (Winston-Salem Symphony Youth Orchestras)
- Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra
- York Symphony Orchestra (York Youth Symphony Orchestra)

Independent Youth Orchestras

- Albuquerque Youth Symphony Program
- Brevard Music Center
- Brooklyn Youth Music Project, Inc.
- California Youth Symphony
- Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras
- Columbus Symphony Youth Orchestra
- East Texas Youth Orchestra
- Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestras
- Florida Symphony Youth Orchestras
- Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra
- Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies
- Hawai'i Youth Symphony
- Hoff-Barthelson Music School
- Houston Youth Symphony
- Metropolitan Youth Symphony
- Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra
- Oklahoma Youth Orchestras
- Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra
- Portland Youth Philharmonic
- PYO Music Institute
- San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory
- South Florida Youth Symphony
- Southeastern Minnesota Youth Orchestras
- Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestras
- Tulsa Youth Symphony, Inc.
- Utah Youth Symphony
- Williamsburg Youth Orchestra
- Worcester Youth Orchestras
- Youth Orchestra of Bucks County
- Youth Orchestras of San Antonio
- Youth Symphony of Southern Oregon

The Wheeling Symphony Orchestra's "Symphony on Ice" combines a holiday concert with professional and amateur figure skating. Photo by Sadie Varlas.





A Team Mozart (beginner) student in the Winston-Salem Symphony's P.L.A.Y. Music program demonstrates her expertise for family and friends before she "graduates" from a paper to a real violin. Photo (video still) by John Jordan Films.

League of American Orchestras

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