

A Working Guide to the Landscape of Arts for Change

A collection of writings depicting the wide range of ways the arts make community, civic, and social change.



Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Music & Wellness program. *Marvin Makes Music* Book Reading, January 2013, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. Photo: [PSO](#)

American Orchestras: Making a Difference for Our Communities

By Polly Kahn

The role that American orchestras play in community life has been steadily expanding over the last several decades. Fresh approaches to community involvement both in the musical offerings of in- and after-school programs as well as engaging traditionally underserved populations have paved the way as orchestras grow in their civic and social roles. This paper by Polly Kahn of the League of American Orchestras illuminates how orchestras are responding to changing demographics, helping people come together in ways that cut across their differences. Innovative participatory models show how music making contributes to community and social well being as well as individual transformation. It explores orchestras' expansive reach to people in hospitals, aided by music therapists who train musicians and provide support for hospital practitioners, and insure solid tracking of results. More embryonic musical engagement approaches with teens and young adults in the juvenile justice system are described. Other examples highlight innovative efforts by orchestras in senior facilities and homeless shelters. Finally, topical projects, often driven by composers collaborating with orchestras, increasingly cross musical genres to address critical social issues; for example: Randall Wolff's Blues for Black Hoodies, written in the aftermath of the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, and performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a concert featuring Erykah Badu; and trumpeter/composer Hannibal's tribute to Emmett Till, presented by the New Jersey Symphony, which promoted public discussion of issues of race. Kahn situates this work in the League's own studies as well as others to suggest opportunities and observe challenges of public perceptions and orchestras' capacities to meet their vision and growing sense of responsibility to contribute to the collective vitality and health of our communities while adhering to a core mission of sharing the joy of orchestral music.

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Over the last five years, almost **60 orchestras have started free afterschool programs** with community partners, providing nutritional and academic support, and intensive musical experiences.

Since 2009, **250 orchestras have partnered** with Feeding America to collect more than 450,000 pounds of food **to help the hungry in their communities.**

The [Central Ohio Symphony's Drum Circle](#) program for juveniles in the mental health court system is now **mandated by the court** as a component of its treatment program.

The [Stockton Symphony](#), doing its work in one of the poorest communities in the U.S., **commissioned a new work that addressed violence and conflict** and partnered with local libraries and schools to host **community-wide dialogue on gang violence.**

The **Dallas Symphony** premiered "[The World is Very Different Now](#)" by 19-year-old composer Conrad Tao on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The performance was **enfolded into the citywide dialogue** reflecting on the tragedy of November 1963, and exploring how the city of Dallas and the country have evolved since then.

In the Cincinnati area, **1.3 million citizens** sang, played, composed, danced, rapped, improvised, downloaded, attended listening parties, and otherwise **joyfully participated** in the **Cincinnati Symphony's [One City, One Symphony](#)** celebration of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

The [New World Symphony](#), in building its new concert hall, **renovated the abutting public park.** It beams live concerts on the wall of the hall, **inviting the community to share the live music making** in real time.

Are these snapshots of American orchestras that you recognize?

Perhaps not...and it is the purpose of this article to paint a picture of American orchestras that have transcended the traditional role of orchestras in community life. Yes, these institutions maintain the core purpose of sharing a great body of musical literature but they are driven simultaneously by a growing sense of connectivity and responsibility to community, along with a desire to engage authentically with an ever-more-diverse populace. They contribute to civil dialogue and healthy communities; make a difference in the education of children; use music to ease suffering; and address the driving issues that confront our communities.

ORCHESTRAS IN A CHANGING CONTEXT

For many of us the joyous image of Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic in its Young People's Concerts may be *the* image we carry when thinking of American orchestras in their community role. Indeed, the annual field trip to a concert may represent our strongest primary association with these organizations, much as it does with museums and with dance, opera, and theater companies. For most, these events were built on the quixotic hope that a single encounter with a powerful artistic experience would provide the thunderbolt that would predispose us toward an interest in the art form.

But the context is dramatically different today. We have experienced waves of economic upheaval and the diminution of in-school arts instruction, particularly in high-poverty areas. We have seen the pressures of a test-driven education system marginalize arts education. Despite these challenges, there are also signs of hope. Changing demographics are prompting orchestras to consider fresh programs for populations, from newborns to seniors, who could realize benefits from arts participation. Although younger generations seem to be less attracted to traditional concerts, they have expressed a desire for the symphonic music in other ways: increased online consumption; a hunger to engage with all kinds of music in new, less formal, settings; a desire to compose and to play instruments; and an overall interest in new music, including symphonic music, that speaks to our multi-cultural national profile.

Fresh approaches to community involvement both in the musical offerings of orchestras as well as in their in- and after-school work have paved the way as orchestras grow in their civic and social role. Both programmatic areas, as different as they are, are intended to increase access and opportunity to all in the community, including those traditionally underserved. These two areas are described first in this article, as they set the stage for exploring other ways that orchestras are innovating and making a difference for their communities.

A World of Experimentation: Engaging Community in New Ways

Experimentation is breaking out all over in the form of novel program formats, new concert venues, and the use of social media and digital platforms to meet the needs of people who want to explore symphonic music, but on their own terms. People are coming together in ways that cut across differences in demographics, economic strata, race, ethnicity, education, and musical background.

Experimentation can encompass everything from annual Fourth of July concerts in the park, to Martin Luther King and Memorial Day concerts for the community, to residencies co-curated by culturally specific partners. Here are a few examples:



Tucson Symphony Orchestra String Quartet performs at nursing facility on the Tohono O'odham reservation, 2010. Photo: The Buffalo Post

- The [Tucson Symphony](#) conducts an annual residency program on Arizona-based Native American reservations. In 2013, this involved the Tohono O’odham Nation.
- The Cincinnati’s Symphony’s 2012 celebration of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony—based on the NEA’s “Big Read” model—reached more than 1.3 million people in ways that invited amateur performances, creative interpretations, digital remixing, and more. [Click here to view video.](#)
- Composer Tod Machover used the entire city of Toronto to create a soundscape, “Concerto for Composer and City,” composed and performed by its citizens. The concerto was seen as a way of putting technology into the service of “a more democratic musical agenda,” as Machover told the *Boston Globe* in a January 2013 article. [Click here to view video.](#)
- Miami’s New World Symphony’s wall casts have used the live telecast of concerts in their neighboring city park as a means of inviting a broader public to share in the musical experience, while transforming a previously rather forbidding public space into one that is welcoming, open, and safe. [Click here to view video.](#)
- Musicians from The [Philadelphia Orchestra](#), The [Cleveland Orchestra](#), and others regularly play in bars and in public squares, and share moments of humor and surprise on YouTube. One of the Cleveland Orchestra’s stated goals is to have among the youngest audiences in the country for symphonic music, and they are adjusting many of their time-honored practices to achieve this goal.

A WolfBrown multi-year study has tracked pilot programs at the New World, San Diego, Detroit, Omaha, Kansas City, and Charlotte orchestras as they have reinvented their presentations and programmatic profiles to provide generationally resonant experiences to younger audiences.¹ The study undertaken for the New World Symphony describes late-night musical and social events; short concerts based on contemporary themes; serendipitous mixes of composers and genres; and the use of animation, digital technology, and social media.

In 2013, WolfBrown’s research study, *Engaging Next Generation Audiences*, focused on the engagement of college students with classical music. And, new, young, hip, entrepreneurial orchestral ensembles—including, but in no way limited to ICE, Alarm Will Sound, and The Knights—challenge traditional views of orchestras every day.

These examples may seem more easily described as audience development initiatives. But, at the heart is a greater goal: to create environments in which more, and more diverse, people can engage with the music and musicians of our orchestras.

Influential Practices In and Out of School

Orchestras have long been at the forefront of arts education, working alongside music teachers and providing unique resources that can only be offered by symphonic musicians. Data supporting the value of arts education is provided through the [Arts Education Partnership](#), the

[National Endowment for the Arts](#), [Supportmusic.com](#), and national and local multi-arts coalitions.

More than 50 orchestras created the League’s “Statement in Support of In-School Music Education,” a key tool in the field’s advocacy on behalf of arts education in public schools.

In-School Partnerships: There was a time when “fly-by” arts education—the fourth-grade concert repeated multiple times for all the fourth-graders in a school system—was common practice. The result was minimal authentic engagement by the orchestra with its public school partners. Now this model is less

frequently used, as orchestras increasingly focus more resources on fewer schools and children, where evidence shows that they can have greater impact.

While not new, this trend toward sustained multi-year relationships as a critical dimension of orchestras’ commitment to their communities continues to grow. In a 2011-2012 survey of 114 orchestras, 40 percent supported multi-year partnerships. The work is centered for the most part in high-poverty Title I schools, which most need partnership and support.

The demographic reach of the League of American Orchestras member orchestras, in their in- and after-school programs, reflects the communities served. Among the League’s Getty Community and Education Investment grantees, for example, the children are 67 percent Title I. Of these Title I students, 38 percent are African-American, 53 percent Hispanic/Latino, six percent Caucasian, one percent Asian heritage, one percent Pacific-Islander and one percent more than one race. Special needs students represent 22 percent of all Getty grantees in the in- and after-school categories.

Programs involving skilled teaching artists have become ever more common. In this body of practice, first developed at the Lincoln Center Institute in the 1970s, the artists partner with classroom and music teachers multiple times per year in academic as well as music curriculum. They share in customized lesson planning and co-teaching and they use small ensemble performances, orchestra rehearsals, and concerts as “living textbooks” for the ongoing exploration of music, rather than as ends in themselves. The practice of engaging students as composers, performers, active listeners, and critics is increasing. Aligning the work with the National Arts Standards and Common Core goals (and earlier iterations of educational standards) has supported schools struggling to meet their required academic and musical outcomes.

The in-school partnerships of the [New York Philharmonic](#) and the [Pacific](#) and [San Francisco](#) Symphonies have been in place for more than 20 years, and they continue to grow and expand. The [New York Philharmonic Young Composers Program](#), for example, grew into an afterschool option for children in the partnership program and now has an international dimension.

After-School Programs: At its 2008 National Conference, the League introduced to our field Jose Antonio Abreu, the founder of the El Sistema movement in Venezuela. Abreu, a musician and economist, knew that the creation of free childcare would benefit parents in high poverty environments, allowing them to find work. His passion for music led him to a system of music

instruction that invited the participation of children without regard to musical ability. These two drivers came together to become a national system of afterschool music education that provided family support and academic help; it has proven to be a powerful tool for creating stability and opportunity for children of poverty for almost 40 years. This work is captured in televised segments on CBS's *60 Minutes*, including one in 2010 featuring Gustavo Dudamel's program in Los Angeles. [Click here for video.](#)

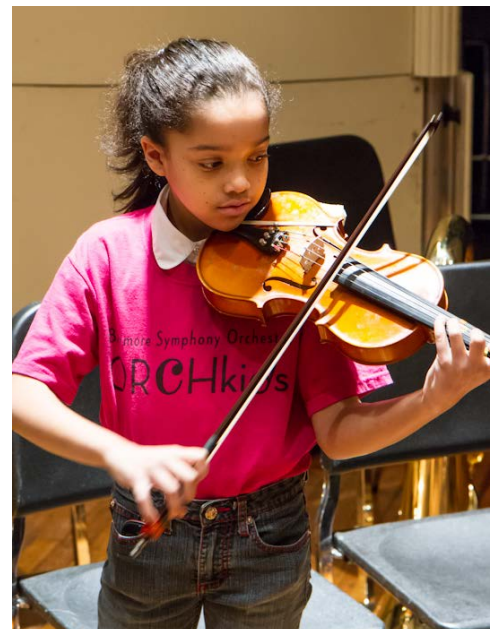
Almost concurrent with the League's introduction of this work to our field, two major symphonies set programs in motion. Marin Alsop, music director of the Baltimore Symphony (BSO), announced the start of [ORCHkids](#), an El Sistema-inspired program at the BSO, with start-up funding from Ms. Alsop's MacArthur Award. Around the same time, the Los Angeles Philharmonic (LAP) announced Gustavo Dudamel as its new music director. Dudamel, arguably *the* rising star of the classical music world, is an alumnus of the Venezuelan program and with his launch, the LAP began its own El Sistema-inspired initiative, [Youth Orchestra Los Angeles](#) (YOLA). The Los Angeles Philharmonic describes the goal of the work in the U.S. "to break the cycle of poverty and close the achievement gap, using music education as an agent of social change."

Grounded as an after-school program, the El Sistema model uses a deep-dive approach to music instruction partnered with nutrition, academic tutoring, and family support. The work aligns the tools of instrumental training with techniques that foster cooperation, discipline, supportive community, and deferred gratification. In El Sistema-Inspired (ESI) programs, children learn in groups from a very early age, with little ones teaching one another. Constant sharing of achievement and performance is a core element of the experience.²

In an October 2012 article in *Baltimore* magazine, *ORCHkids* teaching artist Dan Trahey talked about the foundational idea that drives his work with the students. He says:

"The primary focus of the program is democratic access to music education. It's not thinking about music as a luxury item, but thinking about it as a human right, a human need, something that everyone should have access to. We believe music can be used as a vehicle for social change. In a nutshell, that's the entire program."³

Many of these programs (in place in more than 60 in orchestras to date) include summer programs. In a number of cases, we see the power of the after-school experience translating into a greater presence for music and for licensed music teachers in schools where they had previously been eliminated.



OrchKids, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.
Photo credit: Ken Adam

A number of these programs have been founded by alumni of the [New England Conservatory's Sistema Fellowships](#)—young, entrepreneurial musicians who are the Johnny Appleseeds of the ESI programs. And the Los Angeles Philharmonic, in partnership with the Longy Conservatory and Bard College, has launched the first Master of Arts in Teaching program, built around the ESI pedagogy.

Most of the El Sistema-inspired programs are tracking progress against musical, academic, and social progress goals. The data shows children that are outperforming their peers in math and reading and making significant musical progress. They are also showing evidence of better school attendance, greater parental involvement, and other measures of progress. In the programs that report on math and reading scores, for example, 100 percent of program participants are outperforming peers not involved in the orchestras-based programs.

MAPPING AN EXPANDED PROGRAMMATIC LANDSCAPE

The work of orchestras, as it aligns art with change and social impact, is evolving in exciting ways to meet the needs and opportunities present in this changing context. Orchestras are crossing into other sectors such as health, juvenile justice, and the environment. Research confirms the benefits music can provide for the aging, those in health-care settings, and other populations. In programs that report on health and wellness outcomes, 100 percent report positive patient outcomes.

Health and Wellness

Some years ago, Penny Brill, a violist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO), was diagnosed with cancer. Her recovery, aided to a remarkable degree by her engagement with music, led her to found a program that put musicians in hospital settings. The program, piloted in 2000, led to the PSO's current relationship with multiple medical facilities in the region, and to the launch of their [Music and Wellness website](#).

Research from the medical community, as set forth in [Music & Healthcare](#) by Lea Wolf and Dr. Thomas Wolf, suggests the therapeutic benefits of live music for those experiencing physical or psychological stress. This research has inspired more than 30 orchestras to work in partnership with hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing and group homes, and special-needs programs, including with the autism community. (For a link to the study, see the "Resources" section.) Music therapists have been key to this work, training musicians, providing support for hospital practitioners, and insuring solid tracking of results. Some of these activities involve established medical protocols for assessing patient responsiveness including, for example, physical response to musical cues, reduction in blood pressure, and impact on length of hospital stays.



Knoxville Symphony Orchestra Music & Wellness program.
Photo: Jim Ragonese

With the baseline created by the PSO, orchestras from Knoxville to Madison, Wisconsin have adapted and created similar programs. In Knoxville, musicians play solo or in small ensembles in hospital wards, lobbies, and, at times, for the medical practitioners themselves. At the Madison Symphony, a quartet of musicians from the orchestra performs dozens of times per year in health care settings including nursing homes and long-term medical care facilities. One rehabilitation patient participating in the program said the experience “helped me forget where I was, and gave me hope.”

The Madison Symphony shares the responses of program participants, along with guidelines for creating such a program, in a workbook. (For a link to the workbook, see the “Resources” section.)

Carnegie Hall’s [Musical Connections](#) program has an expansive reach, bringing music to people in hospitals, prisons, senior facilities and homeless shelters. One of their programs is a songwriting workshop with HIV-infected youths at the Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx; the participants’ work culminates in a public performance. Workshop participants, who receive healthcare and services, have benefitted in a number of ways: increased confidence, more frequent and regular visits to the facility, a greater interest in taking responsibility for their treatment.

Creative Aging

At the League’s 2007 Conference, William Ivey, former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, and his colleague Steven Tepper of Vanderbilt University presented a forum centered on their publication, [Engaging Art: The Next Great Transformation of America’s Cultural Life](#). Their work made the case for the pro-am (professional-amateur) movement. They suggested the ways in which Baby Boomers would remain engaged learners and active participants in civic life as they moved into retirement. Benefits of this work include decreased social isolation, the opportunity to build new skills, and the gratification of meeting fellow community members through music making.⁴

[Roy Ernst’s New Horizons Bands](#) for multi-generational amateurs was an early example of this exciting work. In his introduction to *New Horizons 2004*, a book about the project, Dr. Ernst discusses his philosophy, and the impact that the program has had on participants:

“When I started the first New Horizons band in 1991, my philosophy was that anyone can learn to play music at a level that will bring a sense of accomplishment and the ability to

perform in a group. Thousands of New Horizons musicians have proven that to be true, many starting in their late retirement years with no musical background at all. I recently met a person who was starting clarinet as a beginner at the age of 89.”



San Francisco Symphony’s Community of Music Makers. *Play Out, Davies!*, Donato Cabrera, leader, 2012. Photo: Lolly Lewis

Today we see increasing opportunities in the creative aging space, where amateur players are participating side by side with professional orchestras in creative opportunities that are more about participation and access than about high artistic quality.⁵ In the Baltimore Symphony



Orchestra’s (BSO) annual [Rusty Musicians program](#), community members bring out their instruments and revel in an intensive experience with musicians of the BSO. [The San Francisco Symphony’s Community of Music Makers](#) offers instrumental, choral, and chamber music workshops with coaching from orchestra members, and it partners with other community organizations to participate in community-wide musical celebrations. In the League of American Orchestra’s 2011-2012 survey, 40 percent of 114 responding orchestras reported support of creative aging programs.

Juvenile Justice

An embryonic area of practice lies in musical engagement with teens and young adults in the juvenile justice system. Experiments with drumming circles and songwriting, in particular, are showing good early results in helping incarcerated youth (particularly teens) meet their therapeutic and academic goals. At the Central Ohio Symphony, a drumming circle founded by its executive director (and principal percussionist) has led to a doubling of the program and a formal relationship with the local court system.

Carnegie Hall, through its [Musical Connections](#) program, has a contractual relationship with the NYC Administration for Children’s Services, and with the New York State and NYC Departments of Correction, to deliver musical resources to prisoners on Rikers Island and Sing Sing Correctional facilities, among others. The work involves the participants in songwriting in partnership with teaching artists over a multi-week period. The results are then shared in public



Central Ohio Symphony's drumming circle for juvenile offenders. Photo: Warren Hyer

performance and/or via the use of video-conferencing technology, with the teens and the teaching artists collaborating as performers. This work has had cathartic impact for incarcerated young people, many of whom are separated from their own young children. Lea Wolf and Dennie Wolf's recent study, [May the Songs I have Written Speak for Me](#), addresses the impact of this work. In the introduction to *May the Songs I Have Written Speak for Me*, Jennifer Romelien, Executive Director of Program Services for the Division of Youth and Family Services in New York, remarks:

"It humbles me to see these talented young people. Although they may have made some bad choices in their young lives, we can show them that this is not the end of the road—it is only the beginning... Watching each performance is always a new experience for me. Not only am I an administrator, but I am also an excited cheerleader, an astonished spectator, and overall a proud person to be part of it."⁶

Community Healing

Some might remember Leonard Bernstein's performance of Beethoven's *Ninth* Symphony as the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. That momentous musical event contributed to a world community sharing in an exultant celebration of freedom. More recently, in the U.S., we can look to the role that hundreds of orchestras played in communities after September 11, or to the Nashville Symphony or Louisiana Philharmonic after their catastrophic floods, or Pensacola after its hurricane. Often, in times of crisis, orchestras have been among the first to offer a place for community to gather and heal.

When the flood triggered by hurricane Katrina forced a diaspora for the New Orleans community, the musicians of the [Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra](#) (LPO) came back from wherever they had relocated, not only to play for the community right after the flood, but also to bring music to schools, churches, parks, and other venues. They did this for four years, as the orchestra itself was homeless, having lost the use of their Mahalia Jackson Hall. In an article in the September-October 2009 issue of *Symphony* magazine, LPO's music director Carlos Miguel Prieto describes those days:

“We needed to play music,” he recalls. “The message we had to communicate was an essential one, and it was that the LPO is a vital part of this community and would be there for this community.”⁷

And, in November, 2013, when a tornado ripped through the Midwest, the [Peoria Symphony](#) (where three members lost their homes), pulled together nearly 200 musicians from 23 area orchestras and choruses to provide a free concert to bring solace to the Central Illinois region.

Promoting Community Dialogue and Activism around Social Issues

The creation and presentation of music, is, of course, the core of what orchestras are. It’s perhaps too easy to think of orchestras as solely inhabiting the world of Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss, and Stravinsky. Just as these artists responded to and challenged the cultural and political assumptions of their times, orchestral music today increasingly crosses musical genres and addresses key social issues of our time. Think of the powerful response to John Adams’ [On the Transmigration of Souls](#), a remembrance of the victims of September 11 that included heart-wrenching cell phone messages of those trapped in the Twin Towers. Another Adams work, [The Death of Klinghoffer](#) presented by the Boston Symphony, powerfully challenged audiences to address the Israel/Palestinian conflict.



Randall Wolff, composer, [Blues for Black Hoodies](#), performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic under the Brooklyn Bridge. Photo: Elizabeth Graham in [The Brooklyn Paper](#).

Trumpeter/composer Hannibal’s tribute to Emmett Till, presented by the New Jersey Symphony, brought together a huge cross-section of the community in discussion around racism and the progress our society has made in the decades that have followed the horrendous murder of this young teen.

Michael Daugherty’s [Rosa Parks Boulevard](#) is a powerful remembrance of the power and pain of the civil rights movement. Randall Wolff’s recent [Blues for Black Hoodies](#), written in the aftermath of the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, was performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a concert featuring Erykah Badu. The event

brought together a huge cross-section of the diverse Brooklyn community in a concert that needed to be performed twice to accommodate community demand.

And, most recently, 19 year-old Chinese-American composer Conrad Tao’s [The World Is Very Different Now](#), was commissioned by the Dallas Symphony for the November 2013 fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of JFK. The performance was enfolded in the city-wide dialogue reflecting on the tragedy of November 1963 and exploring how the city of Dallas and the country have evolved since then. Tao’s provocative work invited listeners to think about

memory—both through lived experience and through memories handed down—to wrestle with the impact of memory on contemporary experience.⁸

Just as Picasso's *Guernica* stands as a metaphor for the atrocity of war, so do these contemporary works reflect the moral conscience of our time. The local partnerships that often accompany these premieres, and the interest and dialogue that they trigger, are powerful contributors to raising awareness and understanding of issues—local, national, and global—in society.



Dallas Symphony Orchestra performing Conrad Tao's "The world is very different now," 2013. Photo. Rex C. Curry on [Guide Live](#)

Unleashing the power of the orchestra to focus on social issues such as the environment is a growing trend among our orchestras. This work creates the opportunity to engage community around shared environmental concerns, building awareness and using music to make the case for action.

The [Chicago Symphony Orchestra](#) worked with the Chicago Park District, the Silk Road Project, the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, and multiple additional community partners to focus on the local waterways, exploring how rivers have facilitated commerce and influenced cultural life. Along with concerts, the partnership hosted "Chicago River Clean Up Day," a Rivers Festival

Symposium with environmentalists and engineers, and the culminating event, "Shall We Gather at the River," which took place at PingTom Memorial Park with the dedication of a new boat house by Mayor Rahm Emanuel.



Music in the Mountains. Photo: Larry Huntington

Music in the Mountains festival and orchestra in Nevada City, California, working through its Young Composers Project, is creating a musical work and film that will advocate for the restoration of health for the Yuba River Watershed. Bringing together music students, environmental educators, and professional musician mentors, the project explores a defining community issue in the Sierra foothills: the health of the native salmon run and the importance of watershed conservation.

THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF ORCHESTRAS

In 2009, the League of American Orchestras engaged the services of Val Marmillion Research to test the public perception of American orchestras and to help drive a new agenda for our orchestras.

The research affirmed that most members of the public strongly believed in the capacity of orchestras to educate learners of all ages, improve their community's civic reputation and quality of life, and inspire people through unique and excellent performances. However, while respectful of the skill of orchestra musicians and of the music they play, the public perceived orchestras as institutions that have failed to serve a broad cross-section of the public. Others, including the [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](#), suggested that orchestras (along with other mainstream cultural entities) drew resources from smaller culturally specific organizations; that the core purpose of orchestras was more about self-preservation than about contributions to community; and that the Western orchestral canon may not resonate with the full diversity of our nation.

Add to this the urgent challenge regarding diversity within the orchestras themselves. Professional orchestras are approximately 50/50 in terms of gender balance, and 25 to 35 percent of their musicians are of Asian heritage, but African-American and Latino musicians are woefully underrepresented at less than four percent of the total. (Our youth orchestras are more diverse, with approximately eight percent African-American and Latino performers, and approximately 24 percent of Asian heritage.)

In light of that sober affirmation, the League and its community of about 800 orchestras (which range from the largest, most iconic institutions, to almost 150 youth orchestras) embraced a new set of public value goals, in which orchestras:

- broaden access by bringing music to more—and more diverse—communities;
- contribute to healthy societies by increasing opportunities, through music, for active participation in civic life;
- provide and champion lifelong learning through active participation in musical experiences; and
- represent large groups of people who collaborate, via music, to inspire through the power of the creative process.

In addition, the League has made a commitment to use its bully pulpit to drive accelerated awareness and commitment to diversity among staff, musicians, and boards.

This is, without doubt, a work in progress. However, it would be hard to find a single orchestra among the League's 800 members that is not actively addressing these public value goals in some way.

The League drives the agenda for significant change in these areas. In addition to its teaching and communication platforms (via *Symphony* magazine; its professional development work; and the National Conference), the League has developed a number of tools to help advance this work. (See the "Resources" section.)

WHAT TRENDS ARE WE OBSERVING THROUGH THIS WORK

In the range of work described in this paper, we observe a number of trends:

- Creativity in symphonic life is expansive, crossing genres and often reflecting the ethos and issues of our time.
- Orchestras are developing partnerships with social service and health organizations with which they had no prior relationships.
- Most of the in-school and after-school programs started with a focus on the children and have expanded to include participation opportunities for families.
- A number of orchestras have leveraged the accomplishments of their after-school programs into advocacy for the increased presence of licensed in-school music teachers.
- The number of orchestral musicians engaged in community programs is growing; these musicians are participating in more, and more rigorous, professional development.
- Orchestras are creating communities of practice with one another and with other organizations as they share research, teaching protocols, and programmatic experiences.

CONCLUSION

There is a growing discipline around evaluation and assessment, and a realization that data must support claims and be aligned with programmatic goals.

This article represents the current landscape for orchestras. At the same time, it also suggests next steps that orchestras must take in strengthening their work for their communities, and in building greater public confidence in the value they deliver through the music they play, and beyond.

We challenge ourselves, today and as we look ahead, to address critical questions, including:

- What is our core mission and how can we make it more expansive, while maintaining the excellence that characterizes our primary work of making music?
- How do we better blend a dual focus on performance and community?
- How do we continue to build the capacity and skills of musicians to work in and with community?
- How do we most effectively communicate about the work orchestras are doing to engage broad cross-sections of the community so that we can better align public perception with our actions?

PROFILES

Click on links for profiles of these orchestra projects on Animating Democracy's website:

[OrchKids](#) (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra)

[Reconnecting](#) (Central Ohio Symphony)

[Music & Wellness](#) (Knoxville Symphony)

[Prelude for Yuba Salmon](#) (Music in the Mountains)

[Frieda Belinfante Class Act](#) (Pacific Symphony)

[Community of Music Makers](#) (San Francisco Symphony)

- How do we accomplish all we must, given the constraints of limited staff and financial resources?
- What leadership must our boards provide to insure the sustainability of this work, and its alignment with core mission?
- How do we continue to build, and resource, solid assessment of our work?

The work described here matters for orchestras because it is the right thing to do. Every day, orchestras are doing more work, doing better work, and growing their relationships with multiple communities way beyond what once they might ever have imagined.

What is a driving vision for our orchestras in the 21st century? Perhaps it is to create the real and metaphoric public square where *everyone* in our nation has access to, benefits from, and shares in the joy of orchestral music in ways that contribute to the collective vitality and health of our communities.



Polly Kahn has played a local and national leadership role in the arts community for more than four decades. As Vice President for Learning & Leadership Development for the League of American Orchestras, she oversees the League's artistic, learning, and leadership development programs and services, including the Orchestra Leadership Academy, Executive Leadership Program, National Conference, Music Alive new music program, and constituent services, as well as programs for emerging orchestra executives, online learning, mentoring, and self-assessment. Prior to joining the League, Ms. Kahn served as the Director of Education for the New York Philharmonic, where she revised and significantly expanded the New York Philharmonic's education programs. Previously, she served as Director of Education for the Tisch Center for the Arts at the 92nd Street Y and as Assistant Director of the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in

Education and on many boards. Currently, she serves on the Board of Advisors for the Sphinx Organization and [American Voices](#). Ms. Kahn was honored in 2000 as the recipient of the InterSchools Orchestras Award for Outstanding Contributions to Arts Education in New York City.

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For more information, visit: animatingdemocracy.org

END NOTES

- ¹ Alan Brown and Rebecca Ratzkin, *New World Symphony, Summary Report: 2010-2013 Concert Format Assessment*. (WolfBrown, 2013)
- ² Leah Hollingsworth, "The Community an Orchestra Makes," *Symphony*, Summer 2013.
- ³ John Lewis, "A Great Day in Baltimore," *Baltimore*, October 2012.
- ⁴ Steven J. Tepper and Bill Ivey, editors, *Engaging Art: The Next Great Transformation of America's Cultural Life*. (Routledge, 2008)
- ⁵ Michael Stugrin, "Serious Fun," *Symphony*, Fall 2010.
- ⁶ Lea Wolf, MSW and Dennie Wolf, Ed.D., *May the Songs I Have Written Speak for Me: An Exploration of the Potential of Music in Juvenile Justice* (WolfBrown, 2012)
- ⁷ Ian McNulty, "Recovery and Renewal," *Symphony*, Fall 2009.
- ⁸ Chester Lane, "History Lessons," *Symphony*, Fall 2012.

RESOURCES

Arts Education

[Arts Education Partnership Website](#)

Alan S. Brown, [Engaging Next Generation Audiences: A Study of College Student Preferences towards Music and the Performing Arts](#). (WolfBrown, 2013)

[Program Evaluation: Baltimore Symphony Orchestra OrchKids, 2012-2013 Academic Year](#). (The Shriver Center at UMBC, The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the Baltimore City Public School System, 2013)

[Support Music Website](#)

Aging

[National Center for Creative Aging Website](#)

[Roy Ernst's New Horizons Bands Website](#)

Environment

[Music in the Mountains Prelude for Yuba Salmon](#) Video

General

[The National Endowment for the Arts Website](#)

Health and Wellness

[Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's Music and Wellness Website](#)

Lea Wolf, MSW, and Dr. Thomas Wolf, [Music and Healthcare](#). (WolfBrown 2011)

[Madison Symphony Orchestra's Heartstrings Toolkit](#)

Justice System

Lea Wolf, MSW, and Dennie Wolf, Ed.D., [*May the Songs I Have Written Speak for Me: An Exploration of the Potential of Music in Juvenile Justice*](#). (WolfBrown 2012)

Orchestras: Community Engagement and Assessment Tools

All publications by the [*League of American Orchestras*](#).

[Your Orchestra, Your Community Self-Assessment Tool](#)

[Public Value Message Framework](#)

[Quick Orchestra Facts](#)

[Board Self-Assessment, in partnership with BoardSource](#)

[Board Diversity Self-Assessment, in partnership with BoardSource](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion Resource Center](#)

[Mapping Initiative](#), [Sample Map #1](#) and [Sample Map #2](#)

[Ann and Gordon Getty Education and Community Investment Grants](#) and Project Descriptions for [Year One](#) and [Year Two](#)

Readings

Edward Ortiz, "[Harmonic Resolution](#)," *Symphony*, Summer 2012.

Karen Campbell, "[Harmonic Treatment](#)," *Symphony*, Summer 2011.

Chester Lane, "[Sounds of Healing](#)," *Symphony*, Spring 2013.