League of American Orchestras
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GETTING REAL
ABOUT RELEVANCE

League of American Orchestras
May 27, 2015
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GETTING REAL ABOUT RELEVANCE: Our value through the eyes of others
GETTING REAL ABOUT RELEVANCE: Our value through the eyes of others

- How our orchestras can matter more in today’s world
- How orchestras can employ the music we make to address community needs
- How orchestras can help provide what the public values
- How we can develop relationships with the community that enable us to be involved in meaningful ways
Relevance —
What does it mean?

What does it take to know the needs of others?
How do we learn what the public values?
And...

... In what ways do we listen to the public with the same quality and behaviors of attention we ask them to give us when they are in our spaces listening to our music?
Who is this room?

GEOGRAPHY
SCALE OF ORGANIZATION
JOB/ROLE IN THIS WORK
Hands up if -

You make the art.
Hands up if -

You develop strategies, write text, or create images used to persuade / invite people to attend things.
Hands up if -

You initiate partnerships in the community.
You maintain partnerships in the community.
You set ticket prices.
You lead work in community settings.
You raise money.
You design education programs.
You manage people.
You are a volunteer at an orchestra.
You serve on a board.
Let’s agree that most of us here, probably agree with the following things, and that we don’t need to spend time persuading ourselves of these things —
Music is awesome.
Orchestras are awesome.
The Cleveland Orchestra is awesome.
Really awesome.
And just so we don’t have to talk about or prove these things —
Orchestras can be transformative and life-affirming.
Virtuosic orchestral accomplishment is meaningful.
Young people are better off with arts education and exposure to great art.
A successful, visible orchestra makes a place more attractive to companies seeking to attract employees, and aids communities seeking tourist dollars as a part of a comprehensive economic vision.
Communities benefit from successful arts organizations in lots of ways — in economic ways, in social binding ways, in intrinsic value ways — great art makes places more livable and more great.
So we don’t need to spend a lot of our panel time today reiterating these things —
So we don’t need to spend a lot of our panel time today reiterating these things —

We know these things are true.
I will also suggest

As they are also true in other arts-based not-for-profit sectors in this country — museums, theaters, dance companies...

All the things I just said, things we believe are positives about art, about music, about orchestras in our communities.

And are in collision with some other things we probably agree are challenges —
Not everyone agrees with us.
And we work on that. A lot.
• Issues of access, including but not limited to cost

• Issues of culture, such as whether or not people feel included/invited into the buildings and norms of orchestra settings

• Issues of repertoire, and familiarity, and alienation, and interest, and exposure...
Which brings us back to —
What does it take to know the needs of others?

How do we learn what the public values?
Let's get some things out of the way
And…
In what ways do we listen to the public with the same quality and behaviors of attention we ask them to give us when they are in our spaces listening to our music?
So, to have a conversation about relevance, about community needs, about authentic relationships that extend beyond our organizations, we have four amazing folks here to help us address questions of... *listening.*
How do we know when we’re listening well?
How do we continue to embed the great work we do (as well as develop new work and practices) in true response to what we learn, not just what we assume we know?
How do we tell the story of how and why we matter, and what work do we have to do to matter more?
I am going to ask some questions.

I am going to keep time.

And we up here, together, are going try and make this a dialogue more than a series of monologues. We will try and model listening, and see if we can surprise each other — perhaps even discover a thing or two.

listening.
CHRISTOPHER ALVARADO
Executive Director,
Slavic Village Development
BETH MOONEY
Chairman and CEO, Keycorp
ARMOND BUDISH
Cuyahoga County Executive
ALISA WEILERSTEIN
(Internationally Renowned Cellist whom you just heard play some pretty outstanding music with the Youth Orchestra)
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