

# **Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce**

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## **Chapter 1**

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### **Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce**

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# 1 Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce

I define workforce diversity as an environment where people regardless of race, class, color, and gender all have the equal opportunity to be self-supporting, self-sustained artists.

Black respondent, Workforce Diversity study

## Introduction

Workforce diversity, for the purposes of this study and book, is defined as **racial and ethnic diversity** among performing arts workforce participants and stakeholders, including employees, artists, board members, donors, audience members, educators, and community partners.

Racial and ethnic workforce diversity is an inclusive term. It encompasses the leadership process and organizational collective and collaborative management practice of valuing and intentionally recognizing, including, and affirming the representation and engagement of a workforce with a multiplicity of cultural identities, experiences, perspectives, and traditions at every organizational level in the workplace, reflecting the entire community.<sup>1</sup>

According to scholar Antonio C. Cuyler,

racial and ethnic workforce diversity is part of a quartet that includes racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI). Together these intersecting practices embody creative justice or the manifestation of all people living creative and expressive lives on their own terms.<sup>2</sup>

In achieving racial and ethnic access, the historically White performing arts workforce tackles and removes structural access barriers for under-represented groups found in the career pathway and in recruitment and retention practices. In addition to examining and dismantling its structural access barriers, an inclusive and equitable performing arts organization scrutinizes and disrupts the interpersonal unconscious and conscious racial bias of employees and other stakeholders that also often restricts

## 2 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

access, entry, and the full representation, engagement, and retention of participants from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups in ALAANA communities.<sup>3</sup>

Within the workforce diversity conversation, there is recognition that for a performing arts organization to be racially and ethnically diverse, the organization must also value active planning and execution of racially inclusive and equitable or socially just practices in the workplace. The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council defines inclusion as

the practice of including and of being included within a group or structure. It highlights the mosaic of individuals offering unique perspectives, with the goal of minimizing tensions between groups and building capacities to get along. Inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.<sup>4</sup>

Racial equity, according to Fred Blackwell, chief executive officer of The San Francisco Foundation, is

just and fair inclusion in a society where everyone can participate, prosper, and thrive, regardless of their race or where they live or their family's economic status or any other defining characteristic.<sup>5</sup>

### **Why Racial and Ethnic Workforce Diversity Matters**

Social scientists<sup>6</sup> as well as respondents interviewed for this book recognize that racial and ethnic workforce diversity matters because when multiple perspectives are engaged, cognitive decision-making is strengthened, and better decisions are made throughout organizations. When the workforce is racially and ethnically diverse, cultural pluralism or the respect and high regard for cultural difference<sup>7</sup> is a core value and a community connector. Furthermore, in a culturally diverse organization, policies and programs are created to intentionally remove exclusionary racial and ethnic access barriers and embrace the full inclusion of “‘distinctive and creative’ cultural traditions”<sup>8</sup> in the workplace. Most importantly, when racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion matters to a historically White performing arts organization, there is an intentional effort among all members to acknowledge systemic racism and actively participate in its elimination.

### ***Workforce Diversity Engages Multiple Perspectives and Strengthens Cognitive Decision-Making***

When there is intentional and equitable inclusion of multiple perspectives as well as the recognition that input and engagement of everyone who has been historically underrepresented in an organization matters, the

organization is more creative, productive, and more likely to represent the entirety of its community's interests. Various studies have shown that when an organization hires culturally plural employees who have a broad range of perspectives and experiences, the culturally diverse employees will contribute expansive input, inspiring and encouraging their White colleagues to think and act in more innovative ways and "outside the [White] box."<sup>9</sup> For example, a Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as both Black and Puerto Rican speaks about the cognitive impact of different perspectives on an organization: "If all members of the human race are represented without regard to whatever [racial and ethnic] boxes one may check, it provides us all with a way to adapt to unfamiliar circumstances. If you can be inclusive and open the door to everyone who has the qualities you're looking for, in terms of work performance, you're going to ensure that everyone in the organization will grow cognitively and have a great opportunity to engage different perspectives."

### *Workforce Diversity Values Cultural Pluralism*

One White respondent, with an ethnic heritage that includes English and German roots, speaks about the need for historically White nonprofit performing arts organizations to intentionally acknowledge and embrace the multitude of ethnic and cultural perspectives within diverse performing arts communities of Color. In other words, in seeking to create a diverse workplace, organizations must adopt cultural pluralism as an organizational value and lens that recognizes that each community culture has a distinct contribution to make to the workplace.<sup>10</sup> When cultural pluralism is a core value, performing arts organizational leaders respect and engage employees, artists, and board members who share a multiplicity of different cultural traditions within a multitude of racial and ethnic communities.

Not everyone in the performing arts sector is conscious of the multiplicity of cultural traditions that reside within socially constructed racial and ethnic groups. As sociologist Edwin M. Schur points out in his work on labeling, there are individuals who presume "that all people are alike," within a racial or ethnic group, but in actuality cultures and traditions vary greatly within racial and ethnic groups.<sup>11</sup> For example, within the Latinx<sup>12</sup> community there are many cultures that thrive. The Pew Research Center identifies the ethnic heritage of the fourteen largest U.S. Hispanic groups: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, Cuban, Dominican, Guatemalan, Columbian, Honduran, Spanish, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, and Argentinean.<sup>13</sup> Within each Latinx ethnic group, there are distinct rich cultural traditions that are learned and practiced in the process of social interaction. Cultural traditions encompass values, standards of beauty, as well as art and culture.<sup>14</sup> When working

#### 4 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

with artists that identify as Latinx, non-Latinx performing arts managers, who may not be well versed in the rich variety of Latinx cultural traditions, must be cognizant of collaborating closely and in concert with the Latinx artist and the artist's specific ethnic community. This is only accomplished when a non-Latinx arts manager is immersed in respecting, learning, experiencing, and engaging with the cultural perspectives and traditions of the Latinx artist's specific community. For example, one Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as White as well as English and German American explained the importance of intentionally working with artists that matter to a specific ethnic community:

We [historically White organizations] often talk about the White community and the community of People of Color, but depending on the situation, we're also talking about the African American versus the Latinx versus the Asian—the API (Asian and Pacific Islander) communities, and then of course there are many communities within any one of those communities. And it may be for a given project, that the difference between selecting a Puertorriqueña artist or a Chicana artist, makes all the difference to their community.

#### *Workforce Diversity Recognizes That Intersectional Social Identities Are Community Connectors*

Broadly defined, a performing arts organization that supports racial and ethnic workforce diversity, not only openly values the shared leadership and contributions of a culturally plural workforce, but also acknowledges and welcomes the involvement of a workforce grounded in the intersecting relationships among race and the socially constructed categories of gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, age, disability status, religion, and sexual orientation, among others. In a workplace environment that considers racial and ethnic workforce diversity a core value and therefore an organizational priority in its board and staff recruitment, casting, hiring, promotion, and retention practices, organizational decision making, programming, and community relationships, all intersecting social identities are equally acknowledged, accepted, respected, and treated as assets and not deficits to the performing arts organization.<sup>15</sup> With respect to intersectionality or the interrelationships among race, ethnicity, and other social identities, one African American respondent who interviewed for the Workforce Diversity study emphasized how important it is to broadly define workforce diversity:

I see workforce diversity on a broad spectrum inclusive of race, age, religion, and sexual orientation. I don't believe it's enough to just have racial diversity in an organization. I find that in my position as a marketer, having employees of various ages, cultural, and ethnic

backgrounds only add to my ability to speak to different audiences and ultimately do my job better.

## **The State of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts: A Statistical Portrait**

Both scholars and practitioners recognize that culturally plural organizational members collectively make better decisions, are cultural connectors with communities of Color, and provide opportunity and access to individuals who have been historically marginalized. But what does the statistical data tell us about the extent to which U.S. nonprofit performing arts organizations<sup>16</sup> are culturally plural and reflect the U.S. population? In addition, to what degree does the nonprofit performing arts workforce replicate the racial and ethnic diversity found in U.S. major metropolitan areas? To what extent are specific performing arts disciplines racially and ethnically diverse? Furthermore, what is the racial and ethnic makeup of the audience members, board members, and funding institutions that provide substantial revenue to the nonprofit performing arts sector? And, how does the racial and ethnic diversity of these revenue sources impact racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the performing arts workforce?

### ***Do Performing Arts Organizations Reflect the Racial Diversity of the U.S. Population?***

According to the United States Census Bureau, the total United States population is currently 60.4% White non-Hispanic, 13.4% Black or African American non-Hispanic, 18.3% Hispanic or Latino, 5.9% Asian non-Hispanic, 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native non-Hispanic, and 2.7% identify as Two or More Races.<sup>17</sup>

There is statistical evidence that the majority of artists, managers, and board members<sup>18</sup> do not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the majority of artists, who may or may not be affiliated with an organization, identify as White non-Hispanic.<sup>19</sup> Of the more than two million artists working in the United States during the period 2006–2010, and of individuals that identify as only one race (excluding Hispanic ethnicity), more than 78% identify as White non-Hispanic, nearly 6% identify as Black or African American non-Hispanic, more than 8% identify as Hispanic or Latino, and more than 5% identify as Asian, non-Hispanic (including Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders). Less than 2% of artists identify as non-Hispanic and more than one race.<sup>20</sup>

Scholars Antonio C. Cuyler and Francie Ostrower independently examined the degree to which racial and ethnic diversity is found within

## 6 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

the arts workforce. Cuyler's study on racial and ethnic diversity in arts management found that 78% of nonprofit arts managers identify as Caucasian or White American; 6% identify as Black or African American; 7% identify as Chicano, Hispanic, or Latino American; and 3% identify as Asian American. Four percent identify as Multiethnic, and 2% selected the "Other" category.<sup>21</sup>

Ostrower's study, *Diversity on Cultural Boards: Implications for Organizational Value and Impact*, which analyzed the data of more than 400 arts organizations, found that 91% of nonprofit cultural board members were White non-Hispanic; 4% were African American or Black non-Hispanic; and 2% were Hispanic or Latino.<sup>22</sup> From these national statistics, we can conclude that the racial and ethnic representation of most U.S. performing arts organizations does not reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States. Statistics also show that the U.S. performing arts workforce doesn't reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of many major metropolitan areas in the United States.

### ***Racial and Ethnic Diversity of U.S. Metropolitan Areas Is Not Reflected in the Workforce***

This country's major metropolitan areas are extremely racially and ethnically diverse and are becoming more so. In the last census, the White population was the minority in 22 out of 100 of the largest cities.<sup>23</sup> In New York, for example, more than two-thirds of the population identify as POC.<sup>24</sup> In Los Angeles county, almost three quarters of the population identifies this way as well.<sup>25</sup> Yet, research shows that the cultural organizations in these two cities are majority-White non-Hispanic, when it comes to its staff and board racial and ethnic demographics. In July 2015, research organization ITHAKA S+R surveyed the extent to which New York City's cultural organizations are diverse (e.g., racial and ethnic diversity, gender). They surveyed 987 New York City cultural organizations (including performing arts organizations), which are funded by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), representing 36,441 employees and in their report, *Diversity in the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Community*, found that the racial and ethnic composition of New York City Department of Cultural Affairs grantees is as follows: "In the aggregate, DCLA [grantee] staff is 62% white non-Hispanic and 38% minority. Minority groups with over five percent representation include black or African American (15%), Hispanic (10%) and Asian (8%)." These numbers do not correspond to the United States 2010 Census racial and ethnic population demographics of New York City, where 67% of the population are POC and 33% are White non-Hispanic.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, the DCLA study found that New York City's cultural leaders or senior executives are 74% White non-Hispanic and its board

members are 75% White non-Hispanic.<sup>27</sup> Mid-level staff are 68% White non-Hispanic and 55% of junior staff members are staffed by White non-Hispanic employees.<sup>28</sup> The significant difference in racial and ethnic demographics between senior and mid-level and junior managers raises questions about the opportunity for more managers of Color to become senior leaders as White non-Hispanic managers retire in the coming years. But could this goal of promoting mid-level and junior managers to more senior positions be realized when 77% of the respondents to the study believe that there are no barriers for increasing diversity among employees, 74% said there were no barriers for increasing diversity among senior staff members, and 68% believe that there are no barriers to increasing board diversity?<sup>29</sup> If there are no barriers to advancement and recruitment, why are senior managers and board members of cultural organizations in New York City predominately White?

In November 2015, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission funded a study, *The Demographics of the Arts and Cultural Workforce in Los Angeles County*, conducted by DataArts to determine the racial and ethnic diversity of the cultural community's leadership and staff. Their sample included 386 cultural organizations and 3,175 respondents.<sup>30</sup> Sixty percent of cultural workers in Los Angeles County identified as White non-Hispanic and the population of Los Angeles County is 27% White non-Hispanic.<sup>31</sup> In addition, 4% of cultural workers identified as Black or African American, 14% as Hispanic or Latino(a), and 10% as Asian. An additional 4% identified as being More Than One Race or Ethnicity.<sup>32</sup> The senior staff of Los Angeles County cultural organizations identified as 63% White non-Hispanic, while the general staff identified as 53% White non-Hispanic, demonstrating that there is greater racial and ethnic diversity among general staff and an opportunity to promote junior POC to senior level positions. Board members in Los Angeles County cultural organizations were also more likely to identify as White non-Hispanic, as 68% did so. Sixty-six percent of employees who work in performing arts organizations are majority-White non-Hispanic, and this percentage is higher than any other organization type in Los Angeles County.<sup>33</sup> If the performing arts workforce is not racially and ethnically representative of this country's total population as well as the population in major metropolitan areas, to what degree is this lack of racial and ethnic diversity reflected in specific performing arts disciplines?

### ***Performing Arts Disciplines Are Not Racially and Ethnically Representative***

Studies on performing arts organizations such as symphony orchestras and regional nonprofit theaters reveal that both fields are historically White and in great need of making racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion a workforce value and priority. The League of



## 8 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

American Orchestras' 2016 *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field* study of more than 800 orchestras found that African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native musicians constitute less than 15% of the orchestra musician population.<sup>34</sup> The diversity of orchestra musicians increased four-fold during the period 1980 through 2014 (3.4% to 14.2%), and this fact is explained by the increase in Asian and Pacific Islander musicians. The study also reveals that just 2.5% of the musicians are Hispanic or Latino and 1.8% of orchestra musicians are African American.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the percentage of African American and Latino musicians employed by small orchestras is double the percentage of those employed by larger orchestras.<sup>36</sup> Music directors and conductors also are more likely to be white: 21% are identified as people of color.<sup>37</sup> The League study also reports that African Americans comprise 5 to 7% of symphony orchestra staff members, and 3 to 5% are of Hispanic or Latino heritage.<sup>38</sup> Senior managers of color account for 5.2% of symphony orchestra executive positions and board members of color represent 7.8% of all board seats.<sup>39</sup>

The Wellesley Centers for Women and the American Conservatory Theater's report *Women's Leadership in Resident Theaters* found that among 74 League of Resident Theatre (LORT) organizations, during the 2013–2014 season there were no managing directors of Color and only six artistic directors of Color in these nonprofit organizations.<sup>40</sup> The Actors' Equity Association's diversity study found that during 2013–2015, 78.7% of League of Resident Theatres' stage management contracts of one week or longer went to stage managers who self-identified as Caucasian.<sup>41</sup> In addition, "The Count 2.0," which is the Dramatists Guild and Lilly Award's survey of writers whose works are produced at U.S. regional theaters, found that 15.1% of U.S. theater productions were written by playwrights of Color during the 2016–2017 season.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Do Predominately White Revenue Sources Perpetuate a Predominately White Workforce?***

Statistically, Predominately White Organizations (PWOs)<sup>43</sup> in the performing arts receive income from White audience members, White board members, and funding sources with predominately White staff. If the nonprofit business model is dependent on revenue sources that are racially homogeneous, to what extent do these resources reproduce and perpetuate a workforce in which racial identity is homogenous as well? While there is no definitive or quantitative evidence that there is a correlation between the racial homogeneity of funding resources and the racial composition of the performing arts workforce, this question and association is worth interrogating as the next set of statistics are revealed.

Let's first look at performing arts audience members. According to the National Endowment for the Arts study, *A Decade of Arts Engagement:*

*Findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002–2012*, over 83% of classical music audiences and nearly 80% of ballet audiences were White non-Hispanic in 2012.<sup>44</sup> If an overwhelming percentage of audience members in primarily White nonprofit performing arts disciplines are White non-Hispanic, and they provide the majority of the ticket income, which for many organizations is a significant portion of earned income and total revenue,<sup>45</sup> what financial motivation do PWOs have to question the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among audience members? According to the National Endowment for the Arts study, White non-Hispanic adult attendance to benchmark<sup>46</sup> performances such as symphony and ballet performances declined significantly, while African American and Latinx audience members had the same levels of attendance in 2008 and 2012.<sup>47</sup> In addition to this steady attendance among African American and Latinx audience members, the millennial generation born between 1980 and 2000 is extremely diverse, with more than 44% identifying as POC.<sup>48</sup> To what degree are historically White performing arts organizations recognizing the social and economic impact of current and future racial and ethnic demographic trends? To what degree do primarily White senior managers and their boards acknowledge that cultural pluralism must be a strategic leadership imperative?

The answer to this question is troubling, as the majority of board members and chief executives in nonprofit organizations, as a whole, self-identify as White and don't view demographic diversity, which includes racial and ethnic diversity, in their board recruitment practices as a sector-wide imperative. In BoardSource's *Leading with Intent: 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*, the organization found that 90% of chief executives, 90% of board chairs, and 84% of all nonprofit board members self-identified as Caucasian.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the organization discovered that only 24% of chief executives and 25% of board chairs believed demographics to be a high priority in their board recruitment practices, and, when asked what they should do to improve their board's overall performance, only 21% of chief executives and 23% of board chairs reported "change or strengthen [board] recruitment practices."<sup>50</sup>

Why do these statistical findings matter? In addition to ticket revenue, nonprofit organizations must raise money from their boards, individual donors, and funding agencies in order to survive. In many performing arts organizations unearned or contributed income accounts for 40% of an organization's revenue.<sup>51</sup> The data has already established that the majority of board members in primarily White nonprofit organizations don't see a need to change or strengthen board recruitment practices. If board members consider racial and ethnic diversity to be a low priority in recruitment practices, how might this cultural value affect the ways in which they distribute their philanthropy to nonprofit organizations?

Individual giving, of which board members are a significant part, accounts for one-third of giving to arts and cultural organizations.<sup>52</sup> The

## 10 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

2017 Helicon Collaborative study *Not Just Money: Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy* reveals that it is likely that wealthy individuals who make over \$100,000 per year are more likely to be White and that their giving is more likely to be centered on large cultural organizations rather than organizations of Color.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to board members and high net worth individuals, funding agencies, like local arts councils and foundations, are critical to supporting the nonprofit business model. There are approximately 4,500 private and public local arts councils in the United States and 59% of local arts councils fund the arts in their local communities through grants to individuals and/or organizations. In 2019, local government funding to local arts agencies was estimated to be \$860 million.<sup>54</sup> According to Americans for the Arts, 91% of the executive directors and chief executives who lead local arts councils identify as Caucasian, White, or European American, non-Hispanic.<sup>55</sup> How might this homogenous group of local arts funders affect the distribution of funding in their communities and what proportion of funding is given to organizations that explicitly serve ALAANA communities? While the distribution of local arts agency funds to arts organizations that represent ALAANA communities is not available, Americans for the Arts reports that among local arts agencies that provide grants and other types of financial support, just 19% have developed their own written diversity guidelines about their grantmaking/funding programs, 17% adhere to a policy developed by someone else (e.g., a parent organization), and 40% have informal considerations but no formal diversity policies for their grantmaking process.<sup>56</sup>

Private foundation staff and board decision makers who create funding policies and practices are also predominately White. The *State of the Work* report of the D5 Coalition, which “advances diversity, equity, and inclusion in philanthropy,” revealed that 91.6% of foundation chief executives self-identified as Caucasian, while 82.9% of full-time foundation staff and 67.7% of program officers self-identified as Caucasian. In addition, they reported that racial and ethnic diversity among foundation chief executive officers and program officers remained the same for a five-year period (2010–2015).<sup>57</sup>

According to BoardSource’s 2017 *Foundation Board Leadership* report, 40% of foundations have all Caucasian boards and 35% report that they don’t have a single POC on their board.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, 18% of foundation chief executives surveyed are both dissatisfied with the board’s racial and ethnic diversity and place a “low or no priority on the demographics in board recruitment.”<sup>59</sup> If there is low or no priority placed on racial and ethnic demographics in foundation staff and board recruitment, to what extent are funding priorities centered around cultural equity?

The Helicon Collaborative's *Not Just Money* reports

that while people of color make up 37 percent of the population, just 4 percent of all foundation arts funding is allocated to groups whose primary mission is to serve communities of color.<sup>60</sup>

Holly Sidford's 2011 study *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change* found that of the \$2.3 billion that is awarded to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations from foundations, the majority is given to organizations that "focus on Western European art forms, and their programs serve audiences that are predominately white and upper income."<sup>61</sup> In an effort to determine the extent to which "arts funding is distributed by race," the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council's 2018 study *Racial Equity and Arts Funding in Greater Pittsburgh* found that of the 218 Greater Pittsburgh area arts organizations that received grants from public and/or private funders during the period 2003–2017, 82% were primarily White non-Hispanic organizations, and 18% were ALAANA-led arts organizations.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Greater Pittsburgh ALAANA-led arts organizations received 16% of the grants and 14% of the total funds from private and public sources.<sup>63</sup> The study found that "no funders' distribution patterns reflect both the population demographics of Allegheny County or the City of Pittsburgh, and the breakdown of the area's arts organizations by race."<sup>64</sup>

To what degree does the inequitable distribution of philanthropy create a socially unjust performing arts workforce? Furthermore, if the historically White performing arts sector's senior leadership receives the message that workforce racial and ethnic diversity isn't valued and considered a top priority by racially homogeneous funding sources, how might this affect board and staff recruitment, programming, and equitable community partnerships with ALAANA individuals, organizations, and communities? To what extent are the leadership structure and cultural values of primarily White performing arts organizations reproduced and perpetuated by a funding system that appears to reward primarily White performing arts organizations for the lack of racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion? Again, while there is no statistical evidence that the lack of racial and ethnic diversity is rewarded, staff and board leadership in both primarily White performing arts and philanthropic organizations must interrogate this question and its consequences together with ALAANA communities.

The enormous incongruity of racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion practices found in both the primarily White performing arts workforce and its funding sources demands these questions: If there is such cultural inequity, why does the inequity exist, and why should the predominately White performing arts sector and its funding sources

## 12 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

continue to collectively pursue and employ racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion as a field-wide imperative? In order to answer these questions, it is important to first examine the root cause of racial and ethnic inequity in the predominantly White intersecting performing arts and philanthropic ecosystem: Racism.

### **Name the Root Cause of Racial and Ethnic Inequity in the Performing Arts: Racism**

The United States has been battling racism from its very beginning. Racism is the White-dominated power “system of interpersonal, social, and institutional patterns and practices that maintain social hierarchies in which Whites as a group benefit at the expense of other groups labelled as ‘non-white’—African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Arab Americans.”<sup>65</sup> Racism works to systemically sustain the dominant group’s privileged norms and values within its legal, political, and economic institutions.<sup>66</sup> Institutional racism manifests itself in “practices that operate to restrict—on a racial basis—the choices, rights, mobility, and access of groups and individuals.”<sup>67</sup> These institutional practices are regarded as normal and are embedded in the explicit and implicit rules of the organization.<sup>68</sup> Both systemic and institutional racism are internalized within dominant-group individuals as prejudice or premature or unsupported judgements, which leave individuals biased, either consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly in favor of their own kind, their own way of life.<sup>69</sup> Without the intentional commitment to seek knowledge to interrogate such bias, differential treatment or discrimination based on racial and ethnic categorization and negative stereotypes may be used to justify the marginalization or oppression of people who are unconditionally considered inferior.<sup>70</sup>

### **Dismantling Racism in the Performing Arts Workforce**

Respondents of Color from the Workforce Diversity study share personal experiences concerning the structural segregation of employment opportunities and the discriminating behaviors that often accompany it. The Workforce Diversity study respondents’ personal experiences influence the ways in which racial and ethnic workforce access, diversity, equity, and inclusion is viewed as a necessity in the performing arts workforce, as well as the need to find ways to disrupt the systemic, institutional, and individual racist practices and attitudes that have and continue to prevail. In the next section, Workforce Diversity study respondents share unified core values that must exist in order for racial and ethnic workforce ADEI to be achieved in the performing arts workforce: Economic and social equity; art that incorporates the multiplicity of experience; the creation of cultural value for everyone in the community; acknowledgement that

communities of Color matter and must be included as thought partners in the workforce; the recognition that sharing all stories will help all of us heal; and the acknowledgement that racial and ethnic access, diversity, equity, and inclusion ensures the survival of the field.

*“Everyone Deserves to Have a Piece of the Economic Pie”*

Philanthropic institutions can infuse social justice or cultural equity funding as well as provide needed networks and mentoring to change the historically inequitable distribution of resources to historically marginalized communities and organizations of Color. One Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as Asian American reflected on how her personal childhood experiences with discrimination impacted the type of work she does and her efforts to disrupt systemic racism by providing funding, leadership, mentoring, and below-market-rate workspace for artists and arts organizations through her nonprofit social enterprise:

For me, it’s deeply personal because I grew up in a world where it was okay to walk by my grandparents, and my parents’ Chinese laundry, and to rap on the window, and yell ugly racial epithets, and be protected if you were White. It was endless. Every single day it was something. For my parents or my grandparents to have responded, they would have been arrested, not the perpetrator. I did not want to live in a world like that. I was touched early on by the power of the arts. I figured that the one thing I could do through my own work was to build an infrastructure of leadership, money, and now real estate to support contemporary voices that really represent the America I ultimately want to live in and not the America that I grew up in. So, my commitment is to look at supporting diverse voices in the arts, diverse voices that are represented in small and midsized community-based organizations, and artists working in their own communities, working to create beautiful, lyrical, provocative, idiosyncratic works that have meaning to the people and places where they work and live. And that means supporting them formally and informally. For example, in addition to providing leadership and financial support to a diverse group of artists, I want to mentor a diverse, talented workforce. Also, I look at the gaps in our own organization and ask this question, “Are there particular opportunities in which we could further diversify our workforce, or our board that will help us with our goal of developing below market real estate for the artists we want to serve?”

The Workforce Diversity study respondent’s work emphasizes that racial and ethnic ADEI practices are a core value within the respondent’s philanthropic culture. In my *Journal of Arts Management, Law and*

*Society* article, “Creating Opportunities for People of Color in Performing Arts Management,” I posit that “organizational culture guides the behaviors of its members and affects everything from who gets hired, promoted, and what decisions are made.”<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, “the culture governs what kinds of people are respected and its values set the tone for human resources recruitment and selection strategies within an organization.”<sup>72</sup> A culture’s core values are the “belief system of an organization’s stakeholders.”<sup>73</sup> Not only is the core value of cultural equity, or fair and just distribution of funding, found in the institution’s grantmaking practices, but cultural equity guides the Asian American respondent in creating racial and ethnic ADEI leadership practices for the philanthropic organization’s workforce and board of directors.

The Asian American respondent recognized above is actively engaged in disrupting the stratified socioeconomic system that prevents some artists from finding affordable real estate and making a living in a prosperous sector of the economy. The nonprofit arts sector is a large industry; and everyone deserves to participate in its productive economy. The American for the Arts 2017 *Arts and Economic Prosperity 5* study found that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion of economic activity during 2015—\$63.8 billion in spending by arts and cultural organizations and an additional \$102.5 billion in event-related expenditures by their audiences. This activity supported 4.6 million jobs and generated \$27.5 billion in revenue to local, state, and federal governments.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, in “The 2019 Nonprofit Employment Report,” Lester M. Salamon and Chelsea L. Newhouse note that nonprofit arts and recreation employment increased from 13.1% of private employment in that field in 2007 to 15.5% in 2016.<sup>75</sup> As was discovered in the previous section, “The State of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts: A Statistical Portrait,” not everyone shares equally in this economic piece of the nonprofit arts and cultural pie. The statistics reveal that this booming arts economy is not representative of all people. One Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies her “cultural history and legacy” as both Nigerian American and from the African Caribbean Diaspora believes that “workforce diversity in the performing arts should address the social-economic issues that marginalized communities face.” The respondent elaborated:

If we are ever going to start addressing the real social-economic issues that we experience, then everyone needs to have a piece of the pie and be a part of the sectors that are making money. Right? I mean like, that’s the truth of it, right? That’s why the New York City Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment has a program that trains and places low income people, 95% of which are POC in entry-level television and film production jobs.<sup>76</sup> That’s why there’s this push to get Black and Brown people into [computer] coding now, because tech



is a huge industry. There's an economic argument to be made that's ultimately tied to equality and better social outcomes for everyone, right? One group cannot continue to move forward while everyone else is faltering. We won't address any of these political and social issues that we're dealing with until everybody has an ability to get on the same economic footing.

*“Theater That Incorporates the Multiplicity of Experience Is Just Better Theater”*

A racially and ethnically diverse staff, board, group of artists, and community that unites with a multiplicity of cultural identities, perspectives, and experiences make the workplace better. In fact, an increase in racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace may promote increased creativity.<sup>77</sup> Social psychologist Charlan Nemeth found that “diversity and confrontation provide the impetus for detecting truths primarily because they stimulate thought.”<sup>78</sup> In a 2004 research report on this subject, scholar Anthony Lising Antonio and his colleagues found that “the racial diversity of a student’s close friends and classmates may have stronger effects on students’ complex thinking than more limited contact with racially diverse members.”<sup>79</sup>

One Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as Palestinian American has found that a diversity of cultural perspectives is indeed more productive and believes:

the work is better when there are plural perspectives. If you get ten people who are exactly like you into a room to solve a problem, you essentially have one point of view. So, if everybody's been trained in the same way, comes from the same cultural background, has the same range of experiences, and those people are put together in a room, you're not nearly as likely to get an interesting outcome as if you have ten people in a room, each coming from their own perspectives, training, background, culture, and skillset, being brought to bear on any given question. And in the end, this is why I believe in diversity the most, because in my experience, it makes the work demonstrably better. It makes the world measurably and demonstrably better.

A Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as Puerto Rican emphasized that holding different perspectives and viewpoints is essential to telling a good story within a play:

Theater is about the multiplicity of experience. You don't put two characters onstage who think the same thing. You just don't. That's a boring play. You must create characters with different voices,



## 16 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

different backgrounds, different personalities, and perspectives, and start out from a position where people come from different places. It's important. And if you think about a season the same way you think about a play, you want to ideally have different voices engaging in conversations with each other. It's just objectively better. I don't know how to say it in a different way. It should be a better season.

### ***“The Demographics Are Changing: Organizations Must Create Value for Everyone”***

In *Diversity Explosion*, author and demographer William Frey reveals that U.S. youth are already quite racially and ethnically diverse and will be necessary to fortify the aging American labor force, which is predominately White and will decline by 15 million people between 2010 and 2030.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, the U.S. labor force will gain 26 million POC during the same period.<sup>81</sup> According to Frey's research, people of Asian, Latinx, and Multiracial heritage have contributed to three-quarters of the United States population growth during the last ten years and that by 2040, the United States will not have a single racial or ethnic majority.<sup>82</sup> Forty-four percent of the millennial generation, born between 1980 and 2000, are POC.<sup>83</sup> How are the changing racial and ethnic demographics of a young generation impacting the performing arts workforce? To what degree are historically White performing arts organizations creating value to reflect and honor America's changing demographics? To what extent does a historically White performing arts workforce make the effort to recognize and include the multiplicity of vibrant ALAANA community worldviews in programming and workplace practices?

The 2015 National Endowment for the Arts report *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* reveals that “among all racial and ethnic groups, non-Hispanic Black and African American individuals most often cited supporting community as a major motivation for attending performances.”<sup>84</sup> This finding is significant because it underscores the value of viewing a cultural institution through a specific community's lens or worldview.

One Workforce Diversity study participant who racially identifies as White and culturally and ethnically as Jewish pondered the question of the degree to which predominately White nonprofit organizations are creating value for racially and ethnically diverse communities and the consequences of failing to respond:

But at its highest and purest notion: How can we foster connections between and among all of us as people? Soon, we will be a country where People of Color will be the majority, and babies being born now are majority-minority. The future is here and it's now. We are a rapidly changing country. The demographers talk about the

browning of America. What does that mean for us culturally and for the arts to continue to be legitimate and valuable? I don't mean financially valuable but in a deeper way we need to reflect the world in which we live, and we need to relate to the world in which we live. Otherwise we run into the danger of having plays that were written a hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred years ago by White men. There's going to be a whole world, a whole population that may not care about them. And maybe that's okay. But if we think it's great work and great art then how do we make sure it speaks to as many people as possible? That to me is the most important question. The second question is, for those companies whose work doesn't speak to a broader community, how are you going to handle the fact that you are going to run out of people walking in your doors? So, there is also an economic imperative to make sure that your work speaks to as many people as possible. The changing demographics will not happen uniformly. Maine and Idaho may be White as the driven snow for a very long time. Texas has already changed. Houston is a majority-minority city. There are a lot of cities around the country that are majority-minority cities already and as each day passes it's going to happen. Performing arts organizations in Texas must deal with this because White people are a shrinking part of the population in major communities in that state. Changing demographics will come to some communities sooner than it comes to others and ignore it at your peril.

One Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as Black agrees that "organizations and institutions that continue to cater to really exclusive populations will just have a smaller share of the market." The respondent said,

I've read statistics that say that by 2045 there will be more People of Color in this country than White people. If that is true, in the ways that we think about ethnicity at this exact moment, it would be hard to understand how ballet companies are primarily interested in having only White people go to the ballet. I go to the ballet regularly, but I feel as a Black person, no one who works for ballet companies is saying, you know, "Let's find the Black people who want to come to the ballet." I don't see how that's sustainable in the long run. I mean, you think about the percentage of people who go to the ballet, or who go to the opera, or the philharmonic, or the theater, and it's already a small number. People would rather keep up with the Kardashians. And I think how easy it is to watch reality television on your computer or go to the movies. There's so little effort you must put in to that sort of entertainment, relative to how expensive it is to attend the performances of professional companies. It's already a

small group who attends live performances and I think this group will only get much, much smaller. I don't know that my grandkids will have a concept of what live opera is. I don't know that there will be five opera companies in America by the time my grandkids are born because I think it's just not financially viable.

*“People of Color Are Your Thought Partners: Give Us a Seat at the Decision-Making Table”*

When POC are included in the organizational decision-making process, it signifies that ALAANA members' contributions as “thought partners” matter.<sup>85</sup> “From a business perspective,” maintains a Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as both Black and African American,

it is wise to have people from different backgrounds sitting at the table, the decision-making table. Let us be your thought partners, too. It is important to have lots of thought partners sitting around a table. While I do not want to be the sole person being asked how to get more Black people to come see our work, I certainly would rather be there, at the table, as the only one [Person of Color], than not be at the table at all. It's important for us to have more arts administrators of Color, because you must have people behind the scenes, helping with the decision-making, so you can reach more audiences of Color, so that you can reach younger audiences. America is changing, and it's going to continue to change racially. And that's just what it is.

Diversity of the workforce plays an integral role in the sustainability and relevancy of the arts. As someone who works in development, I see how audiences and the core donor base are still graying by the day and still are very much White. However, I rarely see strategic efforts made to increase the number of donors or audience members of Color. Is it mentioned in passing? Yes. But the organization I work for has yet to implement anything meaningful to address this issue. The artistic side of the organization I currently work for is quite diverse—racially, ethnically, culturally. However, the administrative side is less so. Of the more than 15 senior managers, three are of Color. None of them work in development or marketing, which are hugely important when it comes to cultivating new audiences and creating inclusive messaging. In addition to having racial and ethnic diversity among artists and senior leadership, diverse development and marketing teams matter too, since we are actively raising the money from various constituency groups and creating the collateral needed to attract diverse audiences. If you have an all-White development and or marketing team, you risk producing materials and a narrative that may not accurately reflect the culture of Color you are trying to reach and embrace.

If organizations (especially “high art,” historically White arts organizations) don’t make concerted efforts to reach out to diverse populations, then they will continue to be perceived as elitist and exclusive—which are major perceptual barriers to having many People of Color attend ballet, theater, opera, or orchestra performances. (Though it is important to note that many People of Color are interested in seeing artists who look like them and art that is telling a story that they can relate to.) As an administrator of Color, I’ve got a lot to say. We must have diversity in voices. You must have differences of opinion to help create better thinking. That, again, will move the art, absolutely.

*“Sharing All of Our Stories Will Help All of Us Heal”*

One Workforce Diversity study respondent who “grew up [identifying as] Black because they put so much emphasis on it [social identity],” believes that diversity in the performing arts is crucial because it will help us heal as a society. The respondent explained,

I used the arts as a platform to flush out the issues of racism, gender inequality, and ethnicity, and being a Person of Color, I identify with the plight of so many People of Color and their struggles just to be. Just to be, not to do anything else, just to be where they are in their existence. When we have the arts in our lives, we can all tell our stories, and then we’ll all learn from sharing those stories with each other. When we can experience the arts as a people, that’s when we can heal, that’s when we can learn, and that’s when we can begin to heal the wounds that need to be healed. Through sharing our stories, we’re moving those boundaries and those things that are in the way of seeing that progress.

Another Workforce Diversity study respondent who identifies as Black elaborates on the idea that everyone’s story needs to be told, otherwise racial and ethnic segregation will continue to be perpetuated in the U.S. The respondent asserted:

Workforce diversity tells our story as Americans, and that if we’re not culturally diverse on stage, off stage, on camera, behind the camera, then we’re telling stories to our children that aren’t true, and we’re perpetuating more separation of ourselves and our society. If the arts can’t get it right, I don’t think anybody can. Because we’re the people that have the ability. We come to the table. The spirit of artists is a spirit of ensemble. It is the spirit of working together and creating something together. And if we can’t do that, that’s a problem. Because if we can’t do it, then how do we expect it to happen in

the workforce? How do we expect it to happen in the schools? How do we expect it to happen in our neighborhoods and in our communities? So, we must be the leaders of diversity, we must be the leaders in telling the stories of diversity, we must be the leaders in who's being hired and who's being brought to the table. That's the only way, as artists, that we can then create the dialogue, create the conversation, and create the change necessary in our communities for us to become much more diverse. And more importantly, not just more diverse, but more open and more accepting of each other as humans.

*“Workforce Diversity Will Ensure the Survival of the Performing Arts Sector”*

John Moore's *American Theatre* article, “American Theatre's Leadership Vacuum: Who Will Fill It?,” posits that within ten years, 50% of nonprofit theater organizations will have experienced a leadership transition.<sup>86</sup> In planning for the leadership vacuum, and ultimately the survival of the field, what are PWOs doing to make sure that their leadership reflects and will replicate the changing demographics of the United States? And if PWOs choose to remain primarily White, why would leaders of Color want to work in performing arts organizations that are not racially and ethnically accessible, diverse, equitable, and inclusive?

The next two Workforce Diversity study respondents of Color maintain that racial and ethnic workforce diversity will ensure the survival of the field and that the historically White performing arts sector should not fear it.

Respondent #1: “We know from research that workforce diversity creates better organizations, more resilient organizations, and more creative organizations. So, there is real research to back that up, which is great. We need that. Although workforce diversity planning and execution has mostly been done in a corporate environment, I really do think that a workforce diversity strategy is the key to the survival of the nonprofit performing arts field. If we are thinking about long-term sustainability within changing communities and we're not changing ourselves, who is going to support us? How will we be able to evolve as [a field] and as institutions if we don't bring our communities with us?”

Respondent #2: “We shouldn't be fearful of becoming more diverse. I think there's a lot of fear in America right now because we're changing so much, and our racial and ethnic demographics are becoming more diverse every single year. I think that's why there's so much conflict right now in terms of race because there is this inherent fear of marginalization and ultimately the unknown. The

majority will become the minority and certain people feel that they won't have a voice anymore and that's not true. I think this fear and how this fear manifests are something that we need to be very conscious of as leaders in performing arts organizations and how can we quell this fear and build the confidence that there is always room at the table."

## **Conclusion**

The historically White performing arts workforce is not collectively representative of the human experience, yet respondents interviewed for this study maintain that racial and ethnic diversity is crucial to the health and survival of the performing arts workforce. A racially and ethnically diverse performing arts workforce collectively committed to social justice or social action engagement<sup>87</sup> will disrupt and dismantle the web of interrelated systemic, institutional, and interpersonal barriers that continue to perpetuate a primarily White nonprofit performing arts sector. When racial and ethnic ADEI is viewed and executed as a core value, predominately White performing arts organizations not only dismantle historic institutional structural barriers and attack individual bias, but also acknowledge and fully embrace the assets and implications of a culturally plural workforce.

Historically, communities of Color only become marginalized through society's social, economic, and legal systems that are embedded in U.S. cultural institutions and interpersonal relations. Racial and ethnic ADEI in the nonprofit performing arts workforce is necessary because all of our stories and legacies are of cultural significance and our country and society cannot afford to develop separately anymore. Everyone deserves to have a piece of the economic pie that is generated by the performing arts economy. Nonprofit performing arts organizations are public organizations and are legally required to be open and accessed by all people.

Furthermore, when performing arts organizations represent and include a multiplicity of stories, voices, and experiences, the art is "just better." Additionally, U.S. racial and ethnic demographics have changed and are continuing to change, and public nonprofit organizations must create value that is representative by including all cultural legacies in every aspect of the performing arts workforce. When historically White performing arts organizations make racial and ethnic ADEI an organizational priority and core value, it signifies that communities of Color matter. If communities of Color really matter, members of ALAANA communities must share leadership power and funding, be recognized, and be intentionally recruited as thought partners in the development of all performing arts organizational policies and practices. This social justice lens and worldview will ensure collective racial healing and warrant the sector's survival. Consequently the historically White nonprofit performing arts sector must not fear what it will take to dismantle its

discriminatory practices and create a racially and ethnically accessible, diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce.

However, the quantitative data presented in this chapter overwhelmingly points to an alarming amount of social injustice based on the underrepresentation or absence of POC in historically White legally and publicly oriented organizations and in the institutions that fund them. The current deficiency of racial and ethnic ADEI practices and policies in the country's historically White performing arts workforce, as well as the inequitable distribution of philanthropy, is rooted in the nation's history of systemic inequity and injustice and its impact on the country's cultural institutions. In the next chapter, Emma Halpern provides a historical exploration and explanation of social injustice in the predominately White performing arts field, as well as a history of the individuals and organizations who fight social injustice by honoring, respecting, and infusing the legacy of social justice practices in the performing arts.

## Notes

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2. Antonio C. Cuyler, email to author, April 19, 2019.
3. Annie E. Casey Foundation with Terry Keleher, *Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide* (Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014), [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org); Xiomara Padamsee and Becky Crowe, *Unrealized Impact* (Promise54, 2017), [www.unrealizedimpact.org](http://www.unrealizedimpact.org). The data was collected between November 2016 and March 2017; Smith, *Diversity's Promise*. The term ALAANA is used by scholars and practitioners throughout this book to identify African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American individuals who have traditionally been marginalized throughout U.S. history. The terms ALAANA and POC are used interchangeably throughout this book. However, I acknowledge that both ALAANA and POC have been recognized by practitioners and scholars as reductive terms and used either together or alone do not necessarily include members of all historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.
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10. Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954), 238–39.
11. Edwin M. Schur, *Labeling Women Deviant* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1984), 29.
12. "Latinx is used generally as a gender-neutral term for Latin Americans, but it has been especially embraced by members of Latin LGBTQ communities as a word to identify themselves as people of Latin descent possessing a gender identity outside the male/female binary." [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com). For the purposes of this study, participants and scholars also use the social identifiers Latino(s), Latina(s), and Hispanic to describe people of Latin American and Spanish descent.
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17. U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts United States," (2018), [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Hispanic and Latino individuals in this survey may be of any race. Population estimates are for 2018. Percentages may not total 100% due to the rounding of percentages required by the Census Bureau's Disclosure Review Board. I acknowledge that data presented in this book may not be comparable due to methodology differences that may exist between different data sources.
18. These statistics include artists, managers, and board members who work for both visual and performing arts organizations.
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24 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

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27. Schonfeld and Sweeney, *Diversity in the New York City*, 21, 27, <https://sr.ithaka.org>.
28. *Ibid.*, 21.
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30. DataArts, *The Demographics of the Arts*, 5, 7, [www.lacountyarts.org](http://www.lacountyarts.org).
31. *Ibid.*, 15.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, 21, 23.
34. League of American Orchestras, *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*. A Report by the League of American Orchestras With Research and Data Analysis by James Doeser, Ph.D. (New York, NY: League of American Orchestras, 2016), 3, <https://americanorchestras.org>.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, 4.
37. *Ibid.*, 5.
38. *Ibid.*, 6.
39. *Ibid.*, 6–7. The League of American Orchestras collected the data on Latino and African American orchestra musicians in 2014 and data on music directors and conductors of color was collected from 2006–2016. Data on African American and Latino orchestra staff was collected between 2010 and 2014 and data on senior managers of color was collected between 2006 and 2014. *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*, a report by the League of American Orchestras with research and data analysis by James Doeser, Ph.D., was originally published by the League of American Orchestras in September 2016. A portion is here reprinted with permission.

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26 *Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

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