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## **Charlotte Symphony Receives Grant from the League of American Orchestras' Catalyst Fund to Advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

**New Program is Made Possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation,  
with Additional Support From the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation**

Charlotte, NC (May 30, 2019) – The Charlotte Symphony has received a \$25,000 Catalyst Fund grant from the League of American Orchestras. Given to just twenty-three orchestras across the country, the grants will help deepen understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), improve practice, and strengthen organizational culture. The one-year grants comprise the first round of The Catalyst Fund, the League's new three-year, \$2.1 million grant-making program made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

"There is a growing will among orchestras to make their organizations more inclusive, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's leadership, vision, and financial support is helping to drive these efforts," said Jesse Rosen, the League of American Orchestras' President and CEO.

"The CSO is deeply committed to a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, and look to every aspect of the organization, from our mainstage concerts to our community and education work, to reflect this commitment," Mary A. Deissler, President and CEO of the Charlotte Symphony, shared. "We are honored to receive a grant from the League of American Orchestras' Catalyst Fund to continue our journey."

The Catalyst Fund grants will enable orchestras to engage EDI practitioners who will help implement a range of organizational development activities involving musicians, staff, board, and, in some cases, volunteers and community leaders. Action items brought forth by the grant recipients in their work plans include, among others:

- Creating formal EDI strategic plans and baseline audits, including written assessments, benchmarks, and key progress indicators
- Delivering cultural competency and anti-racism training for orchestra stakeholders focusing on topics such as implicit bias, labeling, stereotyping, micro-aggressions
- Helping orchestras improve internal practices such as coaching, mentoring, and recruitment procedures

The orchestras receiving this first round of Catalyst Fund grants vary greatly in size and location, mission and communities; all will be part of The Catalyst Fund Learning Cohort, made possible by the generous support of the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation. Embedded into the grants program, this series of in-person and virtual convenings will enable Catalyst Fund recipients to share ideas, perspectives, and challenges with the aim of achieving field-wide impact.

The first cohort meeting, the Catalyst Fund Forum, will take place on June 3 in Nashville, at the League's National Conference (June 3-5). Facilitated by Liz Alsina, founder of Canarii Solutions, and directed by Karen Yair, the League's Vice President, Knowledge, Learning, Leadership, the Forum will help build a sense of community within Catalyst Fund grantees and set a baseline understanding of what equity, diversity, and inclusion means in the context of the cohort experience.

The Catalyst Fund is informed by earlier dialogue and research. A major national convening co-hosted by the League and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in December 2015 was catalytic in launching national task forces and annual convenings to engage orchestras in EDI efforts. Two important League studies, *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*, and *Forty Years of Fellowships: A Study of Orchestras' Efforts to Include African American and Latino Musicians*, further served to inform and stimulate action. In April 2018 the League launched, in partnership with The Sphinx Organization and the New World Symphony, the National Alliance for Audition Support, a national initiative that offers Black and Latinx musicians a customized combination of mentoring, audition preparation, and audition travel stipends. Additional information on these programs and other EDI activity, including information about the League's [EDI Strategic Framework](#), is available from the League's online [EDI Resource Center](#).

**2019 Catalyst Fund Grant Recipients:**

Albany Symphony  
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra  
Chicago Sinfonietta  
Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras  
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra  
Detroit Symphony Orchestra  
Grand Rapids Symphony  
Handel and Haydn Society  
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra  
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra  
Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra  
Los Angeles Philharmonic  
Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra  
Nashville Symphony  
New Jersey Youth Symphony  
New World Symphony  
Oakland Symphony  
Oregon Symphony  
The Philadelphia Orchestra  
The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra  
San Francisco Symphony  
Seattle Symphony  
Virginia Symphony Orchestra

**About the Program:**

The Catalyst Fund is a three-year pilot program of annual grants to adult and youth orchestras that aims to advance their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and to foster effective EDI practices. The Catalyst Fund is supported by a three-year, \$2.1 million grant to the League from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Orchestras are required to use the funds to support the costs of retaining a skilled EDI practitioner to advance EDI learning objectives. Grantees will be linked into a learning community that serves as a platform to share their learning, including a dedicated online forum as well as remote and in-person convenings, made possible by the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

League member orchestras were eligible to apply for Catalyst Fund grants; applications were reviewed by an independent panel of experts.

**About the Charlotte Symphony**

Founded in 1932, the Charlotte Symphony is a longstanding nonprofit organization committed to connecting and strengthening our community through exceptional musical experiences. Led by internationally renowned Music Director Christopher Warren-Green, the Symphony upholds the highest artistic integrity and takes bold steps to engage the community through music that enriches the human spirit. We employ professional full-time orchestra musicians, support two youth orchestras, and offer significant educational programming aimed at improving areas of our community with the greatest need. The Charlotte Symphony is integral to the Charlotte area, serving its community through music that connects and inspires. [charlottesymphony.org](http://charlottesymphony.org)

**About the League**

The **League of American Orchestras** leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of more than 2,000 organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned orchestras to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The only national organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League is a nexus of knowledge and innovation, advocacy, and leadership advancement. Its conferences and events, award-winning *Symphony* magazine, website, and other publications inform people around the world about orchestral activity and developments. Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League links a national network of thousands of instrumentalists, conductors, managers and administrators, board members, volunteers, and business partners. Visit [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org).

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