



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Charlotte Symphony One of 25 Orchestras to Receive
Catalyst Fund Grant from League of American Orchestras
To Advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Within Their Organization**

May 20, 2021 | Charlotte, NC – The League of American Orchestras has awarded a \$19,500 grant to the Charlotte Symphony to strengthen their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and to help transform organizational culture. Given to just twenty-five orchestras nationwide, the one-year grants comprise the final round of The Catalyst Fund, the League’s three-year, \$2.1 million grant-making program, made possible by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

The Charlotte Symphony has received a Catalyst Fund Grant to advance its EDI work all three years, demonstrating its strong commitment and dedication to EDI work and an increased awareness that systemic change requires a sustained effort over time.

“American orchestras have made a strong commitment to embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion and reverse decades of inequity on-stage and off – an imperative made even more urgent by the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on communities of color,” said Simon Woods, the League’s President and CEO. “This is a long-term journey, but it starts with taking immediate action and creating organizational momentum. We’re grateful for The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s long-standing support for the orchestral field, and for the strategic vision that has allowed this group of orchestras to model what change looks like for our entire field through their Catalyst Fund grants.”

The Catalyst Fund has made a strong impact on the field, with several orchestras receiving multiple grants over three years to sustain their work. Since its launch in 2019, 76 Catalyst Fund grants were awarded to 49 orchestras of all sizes and types. More than 80% of first-year grantees reported making either policy or programming changes as a result of their funded work, with most engaging board and musicians alongside staff.

EDI practitioners are central to The Catalyst Fund grant program, helping orchestras implement a range of organizational development activities involving musicians, staff, board, and, in some cases, volunteers and community leaders. These include anti-bias trainings, institutional audits, the creation of formal EDI plans, and work to build consensus and integrate EDI into mission statements and culture. Community building is also a key component of the program; The Catalyst Fund Learning Cohort, made possible by the generous support of the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, enables past and present grantees to interact with colleagues through remote

and (pre-pandemic) in-person convenings, peer learning, and a dedicated web-based forum. Applications were reviewed by an independent panel of EDI experts and practitioners in the arts and orchestral fields.

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.

About the Charlotte Symphony

Celebrating its 90th anniversary in the 2021–22 season, the Charlotte Symphony is committed to uplifting, entertaining, and educating the diverse communities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and beyond 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. The CSO employs 62 professional full-time orchestra musicians, serves three youth orchestras, and offers significant educational programming aimed at improving areas of our community with the greatest need. The Charlotte Symphony plays a leading cultural role in the Charlotte area and aims to serve the community as a civic leader, reflecting and uniting our region through the transformative power of live music. charlottesymphony.org

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 1,800 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 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.

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