



TALKING ABOUT COMMUNITY

Roundtable Conversation Transcript

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Neil Harris, Professor Emeritus of History/Art History, University of Chicago
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Audience Members

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[Start of recorded material]

Steven Winn: Now we're like the super committee that's going to solve the financial crisis. Well, we're going to solve the musical crisis, or something. It's great to have everybody here altogether, and I'd thought we'd just start off. It's very freewheeling, and we're just going to let this thing roam where it roams, and ask the panelists if there were things that came up in those two discussions when you were separated from each other that you'd like to pick up on and go somewhere with, something you heard, maybe, in the first round or the second round. This is assuming you actually listened to the other panel.

Jesse Rosen: We were too busy thinking about all the things we'd wished we'd said.

Mark Clague: Well, that would be fine. What are you wishing you had said, now that you've actually had time to think about it?

Amos Yang: Well, someone had brought up YouTube, and whether that was to the detriment of live performance. And I sort of addressed it a little bit with describing how it really is a physical experience to be in a concert hall. But I have to say it's an incredible tool. I'm the third chair in the orchestra, so I often sit second chair, and depending on the schedule, I'll often play principal as well. If I'm preparing solos that I'm not really familiar with, I can just go to YouTube, type it in, and I'll see tons of live performances, actually.

And it's an incredible tool for me and for my students, because I will see, and I won't mention the names of the orchestras that I often

look up, but I will see very well-regarded orchestras, and very, very fine principal cellists actually struggling with the solos that I'm about to play the following week. And I have to say, it makes me feel comforted. And I just find YouTube actually is a phenomenal tool for my own education, and again for my students.

And with the Internet, period, I actually give weekly Skype lessons to my young nephew who's starting on the cello, because he's in China, in Beijing. So I'll stay up very late. He'll get up very early. And we'll have our lessons. And that's, again, one of the incredible things that we're able to do now. He just hasn't been able to find a teacher, well, frankly, that I'm satisfied with, because some of them have different ideas on technique, and sort of strange practices on quote unquote strengthening fingers, which I'm not a believer in. Everyone's plenty strong enough to play the cello, or a stringed instrument. So I think it's a great tool.

Jesse Rosen: One of the things that I loved about the YouTube [Symphony Orchestra] concert was not the concert itself, but all of the run-up to it. And I used to be a bass trombone player, and so I watched all the bass trombone auditions, and I voted on my favorite bass trombone players. And so you had a sense of having a stake in the outcome of this event. It was a very active one, and for me, as a former player, it was very exciting. I don't know whether my vote was determinative, but I felt like I had some stake in the game.

So I think that piece, where you get to participate beforehand in some meaningful kind of way, makes the concert itself a more important, more significant, event. And I think that's the challenge, or one of the challenges, around technology in our field, is to figure out how to make these connections. And we all affirm the live experience being so unique and so special. How do we now utilize this technology to support that experience? And I think YouTube Symphony concept was a really good start.

Steven Winn:

What about way in which technology could and can be used in the live context itself? I mean, the obvious example from the opera world is supertitles, which people were so heavily resistant for a long time. And as soon as that barrier fell, people said, wow, this is fantastic. I happened to interview Renee Fleming recently, and she said, it changed my life as a singer because people laughed when I sang a line, that previously had never gotten a laugh at all. And she said it was astonishing. It's actually changed her performance. [unintelligible], I think you mentioned something somewhere, when we talked about this earlier, about the conductor's face. What if there were some sort of screens, discreet or not so discreet, around the hall in which you could follow the conductor's face, or things of that sort?

Afa Dworkin:

Definitely. I think technology in this aspect has all this untapped potential. Some of the orchestras, of course, experimented with this. The Detroit Symphony, in our hometown, has done a lot with that, and I found that concert to be exhilarating. And I think there

was a difference in the audience. They could hold onto a look on a conductor's face. He conducted Eroica. There's a sense of connection, a sense of knowledge of what goes on. I think with the example that Jessie gave earlier, the New World Center, I think there have always been these outdoor concerts. There's always been the Esplanade, et cetera. So it's not a new tradition. That's different. Just being out on the lawn, being able to experience the concert, that's one dimension.

But I think being able to have that visual of connecting with a musician, or in this case lead musician, up close, I think makes a huge difference for the audience. This makes it more real, more personal, and I think more engaging. Definitely could tell a difference with the young people. I have my four-year-old in the audience, and he could see the conductor, or a musician. He freezes, because I think there's that personal connection, versus looking at someone's back.

Mark Clague:

I went to the L.A. Phil live concert in Ann Arbor, the Mendelssohn program they did, was it last weekend, the weekend before. And it was an interesting experience, and part of it was that you had these close-ups, via video, of the players. So they actually had cameras that were, I assume, somehow sort of robotically controlled, that could turn around and you'd see a close-up of the principal oboist, or you'd see a close-up of the trumpet section playing.

And it did a couple of things. I mean, one is that it guided your ear, so you sometimes heard inner voices, and focused on it, because you could see the player. So that visual aspect is really important. But my favorite shot was actually from the back of the orchestra of the conductor, but it was partially because you saw Dudamel conducting, but also because you saw the audience. So even though you weren't there, and it was in a movie theater, it felt a little bit like watching a concert on TV. But the thing that was neat about it was, when you saw the L. A. Phil audience in Disney Hall, and sort felt as you were a part of that.

Neil Harris: Can you see the audience when you play? Do you pay attention to the audience, having the sense of connection during the course of the concert?

Amos Yang: Definitely. We can feel when an audience is right there with us, or whether we've taken a tempo that's a little bit too slow for after lunch. And that's why when we go to a place like Vienna, for example, you really can hear a pin drop. You know, when we were doing our Mahler celebration a few months ago, it was just amazing the attention and the focus that it forces us to have, actually.

Neil Harris: Do you selectively pick out any faces? I know as a teacher, it used to be said you've have one face, which, if it got the point, everybody got the point, and another face, if it didn't get the point, nobody got the point. Those were your two poles. And I wondered if you ever sort of signaled onto somebody to gauge reactions.

Amos Yang: I don't think sort of individually that way, but yes, we're always very well aware. And it's surprising. Even a couple of nights ago, just the right pause, whether the silence lasts five seconds or twenty seconds at the end of the Requiem, for example, tells you quite a bit about the performance. And of course, that five seconds of silence doesn't mean it was a less good performance. It just ended a different place. But it tells you about the trajectory of the listening that was going on.

But there are a lot of humorous moments, too, people not realizing that there's an incredible silence about to happen, and they let out that sneeze that they've been holding for 10 minutes, you know? But we really do feel whether the audience is following what we're doing, and how much support.

But having said that, I love it when we have, at the beginning of the year, what they call the All-San Francisco Concert. And it's clearly targeting people who don't often come to our concerts. And you'll get the applause in between movements, things like that. And frankly, I am not one of the people who minds that. I actually like to hear that, because that means most people who are clapping have not been to a concert, and they're not aware of the quote unquote etiquette. But if you read the history books, that used to be commonplace. They would show their appreciation in between movements. So frankly, when people get offended by that, I get offended by those people getting offended, because there's no

reason for that. If they like the movement, and they want to show their appreciation, that's great.

Steven Winn: [unintelligible], this is testimony that you can bring that most of us do not. When you play a set of four concerts, is it often the case that one audience will be quite different from another during the course of just a short run of a set of concerts?

Amos Yang: Sure, sure. I don't know if I could generalize, but even the demographic, once in a while we give a Thursday matinee. It'll be an older audience, and in terms of energy, it doesn't necessarily show itself that way. They may actually be the most attentive of the bunch. And then we have a great audience on Saturday, because we often have youth orchestra kids who have stayed after the youth orchestra. And they are so exuberant, especially if their specific coach had a prominent role in that night's concert. We'll often be shocked. We'll just hear these screams like it was a rock concert, and look up. We produced that? Oh, no, no. Those are friends of friends. But so yes, I think there are certainly different energy levels in audiences.

Steven Winn: And does it correspond, necessarily, to how well you play on a given night? Or do you sometimes feel that, on an off night, the audience was there anyway? Can the audience read you?

Amos Yang: You know, that's an interesting question, because internationally, orchestras have come to play at such a high level, now, that the

differences that we feel in a performance I think are less noticeable to an audience now than, perhaps, they were 50, 60 years ago, is my theory. I don't know, because we have such high standards now because of recordings that people have listened to. So I guess, in a way, I don't sense a huge difference that way. But I do, as I said, for example, all of our concerts in Europe it was clearly the defining moment for the orchestra, and almost each and every night you could feel incredible focus amongst the orchestra, and the response from the audience was also similar.

Jesse Rosen: Steve, you know, managers also have this unique experience of hearing a set of concerts in a row, and I remember when I worked at the New York Philharmonic a very long time ago, Boulez was with us for three weeks. And one of the weeks included four concerts, three of which were on subscription, and one of them was a special, so it sold as a stand-alone concert.

And I went to all four performances. And it was a typical Boulez program. It was hard, hard, hard, hard stuff. So in the three subscription performances, at intermission, large numbers of the audience left. And you could feel in the musicians the kind of sense of depletion. And those who remained behind felt a little left alone. And the special concert, which was off the subscription, which was extremely well sold, actually, the quality of performance was so dramatically different than the three subscription concerts. And you had to believe it was because the people who bought tickets to go to that concert really, really wanted to be at that concert. And the

other people who were there, maybe some of them wanted to, but it was just part of their subscription package.

And this is not a marketing session, but I would be so curious to know, [Brent] will kill me for this, but I just want to take a poll of everybody here. I'd be really curious. I mean, if you could have concerts that had more of the music you really liked on them, and less of the music you didn't like, would that be better? Yes? Okay.

Steven Winn: It is a marketing survey.

Mark Clague: This brings up an interesting idea, actually, because I was noticing this on Facebook the other day, that you can only like something. You can't dislike something on Facebook. You can get a thumbs up. There's no thumbs down. Everything's thumbs up. And this is very much of our country. We have to be affirming, right? We have to worry about people's self-esteem.

And yet, I think part of that audience engagement was the right to boo, or the right to say you didn't like something. And I think we feel so much a think like, well, I didn't like it, it was a bad concert. Well, maybe it was a piece you'd never heard before. Maybe it was something you were just engaging with. Tonight we're going to hear, for those of you who come to the concert, there's a concerto for electric cello, which I've never heard. I don't know if you know

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Amos Yang: No, I'm not familiar with it.

Mark Clague: But the composer's name is like "Magneto," or something. What a great composer's name for an electric cello piece. But I really think in some ways composers want to be, I mean, maybe you can talk about this as a musician. If you do something challenging, is it okay not to like it? I mean, certainly if we're looking at art, we want to be challenged to think things that maybe are unpleasant. I mean, there's evil in the world, and if a piece is about evil, are you supposed to like that, like, hey, that's really good. Thumbs up.

You know, so I guess I think in some ways part of what we need to do as a community is to be willing to deal with hard stuff, and stuff we like and dislike. Even just as a society, isn't that a way in which art can sort of help us engage with each other, if we don't always have to like it? And maybe as a musician, in response, is it okay if an audience doesn't like something?

Amos Yang: Well, I think it's great to have challenging repertoire. One of the things I really love about our orchestra is that it's willing to undertake challenging pieces, and MTT is great about interpreting, and given them a chance. And I guess it's similar to when I used to go to dance concerts, when I lived in New York. Initially, I loved traditional dance, ballet, and then as I started to see more modern dance, I started to actually gravitate a little bit more towards that.

And it was similar to my experience at Tanglewood, when I was in the orchestra there. They would have a complete week of just contemporary music. So imagine the challenge of that. It was chamber music, and the orchestra was tackling large-scale works. So you'd have to really work on it. And you'd be immersed in it for a week. And I think that really showed me that all of it has value. We couldn't just go to a concert and ignore it after that. Oh, yeah, that composer needs some work. We really had to sort of digest it, and try and believe in the piece.

And now, as a member of the orchestra, as I said, we give four performances of it. Typically, the piece will grow on me. If at first I wasn't so crazy about it, by the second, third, fourth night. And generally, I'll have found something that I actually really like about the piece.

Neil Harris: Do you think you should repeat pieces in a concert sometimes if they are challenging?

Amos Yang: That's a great idea. My quartet used to do that with these short Webern pieces that people never got the first time around. And we would consistently have people come up to us after the concert and say, it was so great that you played it again. And sometimes, actually, we would wait until after the intermission, and perform them again. So it actually gave them a little bit of distance, too. So we didn't say, here, try these Brussels sprouts right after. But maybe, if you gave them the Brussels sprouts after some sort of

even worse food, they actually would like it. But I think that's actually a really good idea, to actually play something twice. That might be challenging.

Neil Harris: And I wonder if you were suggesting, Mark, that audiences should express their disapproval more significantly, or just remain silent. Did you have some Stravinsky effect [in mind]?

Mark Clague: [unintelligible] Yes, exactly. Well, I mean, one of the interesting things about the Internet, to go back to the technology, is the ability to comment on concerts, right? And so San Francisco Symphony has been a real pioneer in making electronic commenting open to people. And we certainly have critics, like you, Steven, people out there giving us some guidance, making us think about things in a richer way. But one of the interesting possibilities is for the audience to vote, a little bit like you did with the trombones. You know, to be able to say, hey, I liked this, I didn't like that.

But even online, again, I know I sometimes feel like, well, I shouldn't say anything bad. I don't want anybody to know. Particularly my students will look at what I think, and then maybe they like something I said I didn't like it, and that will color their experience. But if we all got more comfortable, if it was okay to say both good and bad things about even the Verdi last night. Maybe people loved certain moments of it. Maybe there were other parts that didn't work for them. I think we impoverish our experience when we don't allow ourselves talking about it, and

experiencing, commenting on it, sharing our ideas with the community, with the people at intermission, after the concert with the people you come with.

It's so important, I know for me, to actually enriching what I had just experienced, to articulate it, to put words to it, makes it richer. And so I think we should just have more openness, and more willingness to let our opinions out there, knowing that nothing's absolute, but it's sort of okay to like or dislike.

Steven Winn: It was once suggested by a critic that people in museums who liked a particular work of art applaud when they stood in front of it, to let other people know that they were actually enjoying it. And that's one of the dilemmas, actually, of the more passive response of a museum.

Afa Dworkin: An online format seems like a terrific idea for any performance. Our chamber orchestra's on tour currently [in Ashley], and there's an ongoing blog. And for me, somebody who programs these concerts, I actually take the audience blogging pretty seriously. I've found some pretty insightful things. A lot of informed audiences make suggestions about things that should be on. Sometimes they're very outlandish, and sometimes they're extremely informative.

There was a kid that blogged on our tour website that said, "I didn't like this piece by Golijov," and they went on to talk about why it is

that they don't like it, and one of the things she said is that, couldn't hum it. So, okay, from your perspective you need to hum something in order to like it, versus there are people who are raving about the piece, and raved about the fact that the program is more challenging, less tonal, more interesting, and more stimulating. So I think it's really great, because the other thing that it does is, there's an online format to blog or comment about things. I think it takes away that fear that someone has to overcome of being polite, and coming up to a conductor and saying, I hated what you did.

Mark Clague: It probably could be taken to an unhealthy extreme. I'm not necessarily --

Steven Winn: If you're censoring yourself in online comments, you may be the only one who's doing that. Online comments can be sort of thrillingly vicious, sometimes. The anonymity sometimes, I think, unleashes a kind of a deep something in people which I'm not sure they're always telling the truth, but it's some sort of weird persona. There's a whole discussion around that. But I wanted to follow with you off about some of the audiences that you play for when you do concerts in churches in black communities and things. Talk a little bit about that, as opposed to the audience that maybe we experience here in Davies, or in more quote unquote well-behaved halls like that.

Afa Dworkin: Sure. Well, Sphinx does a series of concerts in community centers and faith-based institutions. So we do a church series leading up to

our Carnegie concert, which happens annually in New York, and our finals concert in Detroit, which happens annually in February in Michigan. Delightful. And that is done largely to get the community and the audience members involved, engaged, interested, purchasing tickets, et cetera.

So those concerts are always programmed carefully to suit what otherwise goes on in a service. And sometimes it's devotional music. There's a lot of solo Bach going on by a lot of the solo cellists and violinists. Sometimes, we're specifically asked to perform a work by a Hispanic composer, a black composer. If we're going to a Latin church, there's going to be a request for that. So we try to work carefully, because the idea is, whatever it takes to essentially make the congregation or community members feel like what they're experiencing on stage, or from a pulpit, actually relates to them and is relevant. Because if it's not, they won't come to the concert. There are plenty of things to do in New York on a Tuesday night other than hear the Sphinx Laureates. So we try to do the best we can to come up with a program that's going to be relevant, essentially.

Mark Clague: I've been to the finals concert many times in Detroit, and it's striking. It's in Orchestra Hall, so basically our concert hall in Detroit. And the audience is almost entirely African American. And it's a very different group of people. And I wouldn't say there's really any difference in the audience behavior, or the audience appreciation. People are really engaged. It's just that they feel,

finally, a connection to what's happening. And it's a really exciting event.

Afa Dworkin: It is, and I think we've noticed over the years that the audience has really become, more than African American, I think it's become more diverse. There's now representation from the academic community, from the faith-based institution community. There's a large African American contingent. There's a large Hispanic contingent, with a growing Hispanic population in southwest Detroit. And also, we have an enormous amount of young people in the audience, because that's one of the things we do. We hope to engage and encourage that young participation at a young age, because we feel like that's really the future of the concertgoers.

Jesse Rosen: And what are some of the things that you do to make it more relevant to those specific audiences?

Afa Dworkin: We do a lot of talk back. We make it interactive. We have the conductors ask questions. We do a youth concert leading up to the finals concert, where members of the orchestra do skits on stage, where, for example, this year we had members of the chamber orchestra scatter on stage and speak in four different languages. And this is the first year when we performed without a conductor, as an ensemble of soloists.

So they spoke different languages, and couldn't find places of where they're supposed to stand. And one of our alumni actually

came up and said, what's going on? What is all of this? And she was talking to a lot of the third and fourth graders in the audience. What do you think is going on? Do they not have a common language? And then she worked with the audience members to figure out that the common language is music, and it's not important that they actually speak one language. So we do a lot of that kind of work.

Of course, if we're in a retirement center, it'll look a little different. If we're in a church, it'll look a little different. And we do a lot of concerts leading up in schools at different levels, elementary, middle, and high schools, where we try to get the young people asking questions, ask them questions. And sometimes, if you go into a high school and do a pre-concert concert, they're not particularly engaged, because they'd rather be doing sports or something else. So you have to ask them questions. I think the key is to draw that parallel of someone who's on stage is just very much the same with someone who's in the audience.

Steven Winn: Do you dress the orchestra differently? Last night, everybody's white tie and tails. What does the orchestra look like? What does the musical group look like? Are they differently dressed, one from another? Is there a uniform code? When you see an orchestra, it's like a great machine. Everybody's the same.

Afa Dworkin: That's a great question, actually. Up until this year, we've had the orchestra dressed very traditionally. It doesn't look traditional, in

that it's an orchestra of musicians of color. But this year, with our national tour of the Sphinx Virtuosi, we had them dress as they would if they were a soloist. So we had a sea of color, 20 people dressed in different colors. And all the youth concerts were actually done in casual attire, literally jeans and T-shirts, especially while the youth concerts are in schools. So they're dressed like the people that they're playing for.

And we've found that that makes a difference. Even the critics have commented on the fact that the orchestra looks vibrant, and like an ensemble of soloists, et cetera. There are different schools of thought about attire, of course. Our institution, as in classical music itself, may not be so embracing of that change, necessarily, and I don't know that that alone makes a difference. We've found that it added a quality of interest and engagement to our performances. Our professional orchestra still dresses in professional attire.

Steven Winn: We've been speaking a lot about audience. I'm going to let you know that in just a few minutes, we're going to hear from you, from this audience. So if you have a question, or something you would like to respond to in what you heard today, there are two mikes here in either of the center aisles. So if you would come down, we'll do this in about five minutes or so, and hear from you.

I wanted to throw another sort of thread into this conversation. We could keep pulling the ones we have already, but recently, Francisco Nunez, who is the founder and director of the Young

People's Chorus in New York, was given a MacArthur Genius Grant. And he said some very interesting things about what his objectives are and what he's trying to do. He said, "I want to fight poverty through music. I know that sounds romantic, but I've seen it happen. Music," he said, "brought me out of the Barrio, specifically." I wonder if this is something that we sometimes tiptoe around a little, but never quite address. Maybe, Jesse, you can pick this up. How do we know what music is really doing for a community in that kind of substantive, measureable way?

Jesse Rosen:

Well, I think this idea of music as related to social justice is a relatively new one in the orchestra field in America, or in the United States. It's not so new in Venezuela, and we'll hear a lot more about this from Deborah and Gustavo. But I think that orchestras generally are beginning to embrace this idea. I was at this meeting in Los Angeles at the outset of when the L. A. Phil began to contemplate and plan for what became their Youth Orchestra L. A. program. And the only point I'll make about this, so that Deborah and Gustavo will have much more to say, but this was a meeting, a convening of 40 civic organizations. And some of them were arts organizations, public schools, after-school programs, mayor's office. The mayor was there.

And the L. A. Phil kind of threw out a challenge, and they said that they thought that it would be a good thing if every kid in L. A. played an instrument. And they said, we don't know how to

accomplish this goal, but we think we need all of you to help us sort this out, and to begin this conversation.

And so, you saw a shift in the role that the orchestra was playing, from that as primarily a deliverer of symphony concerts, to a catalyst to bring the community together around a shared set of community goals. And I think the impact question in the United States now around El Sistema-like programs is a premature one, because it's relatively new here. And in fact, I think even in Venezuela the documentation still is a story to be told. But the good news is that there are 14 orchestras in the United States that have undertaken El Sistema-like programs. And so I think it's a wonderful growth of the sense of what is the role and the purpose of an orchestra in its community. It's taking hold, it's getting traction.

Mark Clague: Well I can say, Steven, from my experience speaking more as a teacher at the University of Michigan, I teach American Culture, and classes in the history of American music. And what's interesting is that when you put that banner, that adjective, "American," on all of this activity that happens in this incredibly geographically enormous place, from the west coast to the East Coast, north and south, Latin cultures and African American cultures, and legacy of slavery, and you put that all into this notion of music, and give it a kind of emotional, spiritual expression where this human element comes together, it leads to some incredible conversations about who is America? Who really benefits as part of

our citizens? Who are our neighbors, and the ways in which that really comes together.

And that's, I think, one of the great things about the orchestra, is because it has this kind of representative function, because, in a sense, the health of the community is witnessed in its culture, as more and more voices get to participate, get to be heard through institutions like the San Francisco Symphony, it leads to these kinds of conversations, to the possibility for sharing ideas.

I mean, having Amos and Afa share their experiences of learning about music just really so vividly resonated with me in the audience, just how important that was. And for so many students I deal with, music is their life. It's the thing that makes them feel like it's worth getting up in the morning. It's worth earning money so they can not only buy a recording, but buy an instrument, or technology allows them to put their own voice on YouTube, or to create their home studio recording now is so incredible. A lot of students are creating their own music. And that's a really exciting possibility.

Neil Harris:

There's one thing, speaking as a historian. There are these traditions in American life that go back a long way. We don't talk much about settlement houses these days. But settlement houses had orchestras. Settlement houses had art schools. It was a response to a different era of American immigration history. But it does represent a tradition that can be exploited, I think, today, and

built upon, because the assumptions of that era were that the arts were, indeed, a way of integrating people, and integrating generations, even more importantly.

Mark Clague:

Well, that guy named Benny Goodman I think was at Hull House in Chicago, for instance, learned how to play an instrument. Or even Louis Armstrong, who learned from basically [unintelligible]. And one of the fears I have, and it came up in that education discussion, was that with No Child Left Behind, so much of the effort about education is, are our schools getting our test scores that justify our funding? And with the arts, it's really hard to test.

I mean, maybe it's easy to test. You can give them all an audition for the San Francisco Symphony. But that's not what we're expecting, right? Because it's difficult to measure this impact, it's also easy that we can lose track of it. And that, I think, is the real danger, and why it's so important to have these conversations like we had with Afa and Amos about what music has meant to them. And really for us to talk about it, too.

I mean, I think one of the messages I hope this American Orchestra Forum communicates to you is how you're a part of this institution, and how, for this place to thrive, you really have to become an advocate for the arts as well, and share these ideas, share these conversations broadly. I mean, clearly, you've come here, so in some ways you're the choir. You're people who are invested in the orchestra. You've taken the time out to think this is an important

conversation to have. The question is, how do we extend that conversation to the people who aren't in the building? And that's where I think it's really critical.

Steven Winn: Well, speaking of that, let's have questions. If anyone has something to say, please come forward and we'll take you in turn. While we're waiting, I wanted to ask you, Jesse, again. We've touched on the subject of education a lot. What, in your experience, are orchestras doing about the real gap that's happened in public education around music?

Jesse Rosen: Well, I'll start with a little bit about what the League is doing, because there are federal policy issues, as well as federal funding, that has some bearing on this. The Department of Education does have the capacity to actually study arts education in our field, and we've been waiting for 10 years for a report to come out, and we've been urging them to finish it and get it done, and it's going to be coming out soon. And that will give us some idea of what actually is taking place.

The second area where we've been very active is around the budget for arts education at the Department of Education, all of which was wiped out in the last proposal from the administration on the FY12 budget, and we were successful in restoring half of that, so \$25 million for arts ed came back into the budget to allow schools to continue their arts education activity.

But the largest amount of both policy and funding for arts education is done at the local level. And American orchestras I think have an extremely long tradition of being involved in education, going back. I think the New York Philharmonic was one of the first, as early as the 1920s or 30s, I believe.

And the journey that the field has been on has been one from exposure. It's like once they hear it, it's all going to be great. They're going to love it. They're going to grow up and play instruments, and come and buy a lot of tickets. And we got past that place. And in some ways, there's been a shift from doing deeper work in smaller numbers of organizations, where there's more integration of the musical learning and instruction into academic areas. And not to subordinate the relevance of the arts, but to work more carefully with the curricula of the schools, as well as to develop better skills in the artists themselves, both in teaching artistry as well as musicians themselves who play in symphony orchestras.

And so the Cleveland Orchestra, for example, has undertaken upon itself to hire someone to help them get better at doing some of their public and education work, because it matters to them, and they recognize these are unique skills. So I think we're seeing a very good trajectory of deeper work taking place, and actually the musicians themselves taking ownership of doing this work, recognizing the unique skills that are different from being excellent players, to becoming good communicator teachers.

Steven Winn: Question?

Audience Member: Hi. I'm a member of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, and so therefore see the collaboration between choral music and instrumental music. Also, I'm a member of the board of Chorus America, which is a service organization for choruses that works in collaboration often with the League of American Orchestras, a wonderful collaboration. I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that, for those of you who don't know, over 42 million Americans sing in choruses and choirs. It's a huge community. So a propos of community, I'm interested to know how you foresee both the choral and the orchestral communities working together to broaden the reach of American classical music.

Jesse Rosen: I'll take a start at that. I guess one of the wonderful things about choruses is that they can spontaneously come together. I mean, compared to putting on an orchestra concert, getting people into a place to sing, and also people to sing who are not necessarily professional singers, is a great, unique feature of the 42 million people who sing in choruses, which just kind of leads to this question of participation, and not being a receptive, passive, I think "receptive" is a better word than "passive," but to envision the dynamic between orchestras and their audiences as the orchestra plays, the audience receives.

One of the phenomena that is, I think, running across all of the arts now is the desire to participate yourself, and do it on your own. And there are five orchestras now that were just cited in a report released two days ago that looked at participatory arts activity across all of the performing arts genres. And the five orchestras cited, one of them was San Francisco. The Baltimore Symphony for its Rusty Musicians program where the musicians play side by side with amateurs. The Pacific Symphony down the state from here also has a participatory program.

So I think I'm answering [the] question in kind of a general, conceptual way, but I think what orchestras have to learn from choruses is the appetite that seems to be out there for not just receiving, but also being part of the playing itself. And that's how I'd start to answer that.

Mark Clague: I can say historically that the partnership goes way back. I mean, music education in the United States starts with choruses, in part because it's expensive to buy instruments, and everybody has a voice, and hopefully can use it. We talked about that amateur-professional divide. One of the difficulties, I know this story from my grandmother, that when she was a young woman she was told by a teacher that she didn't have a very nice voice. And so she never sang again.

And so one of the things, I think that participatory aspect of finding our voice, in a sense of really using the fact that everybody can

sing. There are some interesting new ensembles, new horizons orchestras, I'm thinking, where they actually bring music education. I mean, I'm sure it helps to start cello when you're four years old. But if you missed the four-year-old boat, it's sort of hard to go back and try again. And there are a lot of interesting programs that are now starting older adults with music education and vocal education, and it would be really nice to see those things combine and take on a much richer relationship with our communities. It would be exciting.

So I think there probably needs to be more of a partnership. I know that as an instrumentalist, after you spend about five, 10 years practicing on your instrument, you sort of lose touch with singing. I was so much better on my instrument, I stopped singing. So it's probably important for all of us as musicians to exercise that part of our instrument as well.

Steven Winn: Do you sing when you're on the road with the orchestra? Do you hear your musicians singing backstage, or rehearsal breaks and things? Do people sing?

Amos Yang: Somewhat. It's surprising. My students, I'm slightly horrified when I ask them in a lesson to sing. Most of them are so painfully shy, to the point of being ashamed of their voices. And frankly, they all sing beautifully. And that's the best way to teach them how to play a phrase. So how would you sing this? Oh, I don't want to sing. But if they can sing it, who's to tell them that they're wrong? That's

the way they sing it, that's the way they feel it, and that, to me, is the most crucial thing. That's one of the reasons I'm so grateful for the training I had in the San Francisco Boys' Choir. So I think your question about blending the two, how to do it, I think that's really critical and important.

Steven Winn: Literally and metaphorically trusting your own voice.

Amos Yang: Right. Right.

Steven Winn: We've had a patient question waiting over here on the side.

Audience Member: I want to thank Mr. Rosen very much --

Steven Winn: We're going to get the microphone up closer to you. Just a moment.

Audience Member: I want to thank Mr. Rosen for bringing up the subject that's very close to my heart. I've attended concerts. This is my 75th year of attending, okay? And if you'll permit me to opine about music, sound without melody is noise. And we have been subjected, on Thursday afternoons, to a lot more noise than we ever wanted. And where does the person who buys the tickets get to have a say? Thank you.

Jesse Rosen: Can I respond?

Steven Winn: Please do.

Jesse Rosen:

Well, that was a wonderful question to conclude your comment with, and I think it's a question that orchestras are thinking really, really hard about, and looking at the role they play in placing the audience, the customer, if you will, really at the center of what they do. And that's led orchestras into a lot of different directions.

And I think the challenge around this, and I don't know what the answer is, but I think I know what one of the questions is, does have to do with the way we put concerts together. And I think orchestras, we are curators, we are people, in the form of our music directors and artistic leaders, people who are thinking ahead, who are listening to what's coming around the corner, and who are concerned with growing the experience of orchestra, both for the ensemble itself as well as for the public. And I think everyone senses, and believes, a responsibility to keep stretching our public's knowledge and experience with orchestra.

And that then has to be balanced with the fact that people who come to concerts have very different tastes, and very different preferences. And I think some of the recent learning in the orchestra field has to do with the segmentation of audiences. And we know that not everyone is looking for the same thing. Yet we tend to package in ways that I don't believe allows for sufficient segmentation of the uniqueness of different parts of our audiences' taste.

And I could imagine that for people who don't want to hear any new music, I wouldn't say they should not have to ever hear any new music, but I would think there should be ways that orchestras can, and many of them do this, organize their programs so that they are mindful of balance and how it's introduced, how it's set up, and also that there can be opportunities for people to opt out sometimes. But it's a balance between, I think, really wanting to stretch. And I think this orchestra is unique for its long-term commitment to introducing unfamiliar music.

By the same token, our audiences shouldn't feel that things are foisted upon them. And again, I don't know the answer, but if you think about other art experiences, like if you go to a museum and you walk in, nobody says you have to go to this room. You choose. You make your decision about what art you like, and you go look at it. If you're feeling adventurous, then okay, you go into another section. If you go to the book store, you like literature, you read the things you want to read. And we're kind of unique in that we put together our programs in ways that often those of us in the back think make a lot of sense, our conductors and artistic leaders, but there is also the public to take into account.

And so I think our subscription system of doing things merits some reconsideration, so that it places adequate emphasis on the public and public taste and preferences.

Neil Harris: There is an idea from history that can help us here. In the 1890s, in Chicago, actually, with Theodore Thomas, he would do request programs. So there would be concerts, usually towards the end of the season, where he would literally just say, send me your post cards of what you want to hear, and I'll assemble a program from what I get.

And it's often occurred to me that with the ability to go online and to vote, every orchestra should turn one program over to its audience and just see what you guys would come up with. And it probably wouldn't be that hard. There certainly are limitations. There are practical limitations that make that difficult. Certain pieces cost a lot more money. There are more people on stage. They take a lot of rehearsal time. Some musical scores have to be rented, and you need to schedule them. There are only a certain number of copies, literally, in the globe, and you have to schedule them way in advance.

But for a lot of stuff, there's stuff in the library, and the orchestra could put together a program pretty quickly. So it would be interesting to let our audiences do some of our programming for us. I think that would be healthy.

Steven Winn: Before we take another question, the good news about the previous questioner is that, in 75 years, you haven't stopped coming. So that's the good news. Let's take a question here.

Susan Key: Thank you. I am asking two questions on behalf of students who have tweeted these in. One is a point of information, so I'll ask that one first, and then one that's more culturally-based. Deirdre O'Brien wants to know what the study was that you referenced that looked at how orchestral or classical music makes you feel, the issue of the intellect. And I think, Jesse, you talked about that. Then, Leslie Valez, who's a master's in arts journalism at USC, asks this question. Are orchestras still formed to credential cities, or have the reasons evolved?

Jesse Rosen: The answer to the first question is the report that was written by Alan Brown, who's an arts consultant. If you just Google Alan Brown, or his company Wolf Brown, you will find that report. And the other report I mentioned, by the way, that just came out two days ago about participation in the arts, was commissioned by the Irvine Foundation, and I think it's available on the Irvine Foundation website. I don't remember the second question.

Mark Clague: Whether orchestras still credential their cities.

Neil Harris: I think they do.

Jesse Rosen: I think they very much do. One very vivid example of that is in Pittsburgh, where the symphony has formed an alliance with some part of the city. I don't know if it's the government or the Chamber of Commerce. But Pittsburgh, which has had a big population

drain, and used to be a big corporate headquarters town, is seeking to draw business back to Pittsburgh.

And periodically there are trips made to Europe, and to Asia, to introduce the city of Pittsburgh as a hospitable place to set up a business. And these trips usually include musicians from the Pittsburgh Symphony and/or their staff who go along and speak to the fact that this is a city that has a symphony. And so, as a symbol of pride, as a symbol of cultural richness, I think very much so.

Neil Harris: I think the tours that orchestras make, almost all orchestras seem to have some kind of tour schedule, sometimes involving the mayor, and sometimes involving civic leaders going along, even if there's no direct investment pattern, are sort of an expression of civic identity. And that continues to service credentialing purposes.

And we talked about this at an earlier point in our discussions, not today. The materials associated with smart cities, the Richard Florida analyses, why do people come to one place rather than another? What is there to do? The orchestras, along with the museums and other institutions do serve as, I think, credentialing city experience as something worth having.

Mark Clague: The notion of touring resonates with me. I spent three weeks with the University of Michigan Symphony Band in China this past May, and one of the things that was interesting is we've been hosting their college and faculty chamber musical ensembles in Michigan since

then. And I know the Chinese government has been very interested in cultural diplomacy, and actually sending groups over here, whereas before that it was all language-based advocacy, based on Confucius Institute.

So there's certainly in international relations the notion of sharing your culture. It's also about sharing your humanity, trying to get beyond some economic data, or worry about currency exchange and other things, and really get to what unites us as people. And for our students going to China, very powerful experience for them to actually meet musicians in China and sort of realize how much they had in common as human beings.

Steven Winn: Take this question here in front.

Audience Member: I'm really grateful, by the way, for the San Francisco Symphony for having this American Orchestra Forum. I believe it's a conversation that I think a lot of us have had amongst friends and colleagues over lunch and coffee for many years, we've had in our head. But I think it also needs to happen. I see this incredible roster from Boston, Chicago, et cetera, that are going to have this conversation. But I think it also needs to happen on many smaller levels, many smaller towns and cities. Where do you see, where would you like to see, this kind of forum, this conversation go in the future? I think it's vital. What are your thoughts, and where would you like to see it go?

Steven Winn: Well, we have two more of these forums to come this year, so that's a start. But you're talking about drilling down and trying to expand the conversation out beyond what we're doing here.

Mark Clague: Well, I think I really would encourage all of you to carry on this conversation with people who weren't able to come today. I'm sure there are many who were interested. I'm sure we're not going to end here. We have another 45 minutes to go. But one of the places this conversation can continue is online. I think it's called, is it orchestraforum.org?

Steven Winn: Symphonyforum.org.

Mark Clague: Symphonyforum, sorry. Symphonyforum.org. And I think all of us have posted blog posts there. And if you're interested in asking us a direct question, we're going to be watching that forum really in the coming weeks, and for Steven and I, and those of us who will be coming back in March and May, this will be an ongoing conversation. So it would be great to meet you virtually on the forum blogs after this, and you can comment and log in using Facebook and other login tools. So please do come visit us there. It would be great to continue the conversation. That's one, at least, place I know it can happen right away.

Jesse Rosen: You can also link to that symphony forum site through the League's website, which is americanorchestras.org, where we have our own

set of conversations running, and information about the field. But there's a direct link into this particular forum as well.

Mark Clague: If all of you posted symphonyforum.org on Facebook, and just said, went to this great talk, check it out. And the video from this, as you can see, is being made. This will be posted I think within just 24 hours, or even sooner. So they'll be able to be here, and it would be great to extend the opportunity.

Steven Winn: There's no good place to end, but if we don't end now, we're going to be taking time away from our next speaker, who I'm sure you want to hear in full. Mr. Dudamel, Maestro Dudamel will be back with Deborah Borda in 15 minutes on the dot. So another break, and we'll see you shortly. Thank you all.

[End of recorded material]