



TALKING ABOUT AUDIENCES

Spotlight Conversation 1 Transcript

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SPOTLIGHT 1

00:43:13 Mark Clague: Happy Mother's Day -- to my mom, who's back in Michigan, and to your wife, who's a new mom, I just found out. Sunil has a one-month-old baby at home. And I think that's part of the reason why he has so much energy, is he's not used to sleeping at all. So the fact that he woke up on the East Coast and is now here in Davies Hall on this stage -- we're happy to have you.

Sunil Iyengar: Thank you.

00:43:35 Mark Clague: My name is Mark Clague; I'm a professor of music history at the University of Michigan, and this is the third time I've been out here for the American Orchestra Forum, and it's really an exciting event to have the New York Philharmonic be our focus and our guest, in part because they are the longest standing American orchestra, founded in 1842. So we're really reaching 'way back. Sunil Iyengar is my guest, and he is the director of research and analysis for the National Endowment for the Arts.

00:44:02 And we figured if we were going to talk about audiences, we should bring in an expert who can sort of tell us a bit about who we are as audiences, as listeners. There's a lot of sort of information and misinformation and buzz and concern and panic and relief about what's happening with audiences these days, but you're the guy doing the number crunching. So where are we with audiences? What is the state of our audiences today? Are things changing? Are things pretty stable? What's happening?

00:44:30 Sunil Iyengar: As I start to answer that question, I think people after hearing that great dialogue between -- hearing Alan

kind of talk about where he's been moving the Philharmonic and hearing you all -- I know that the question of who you are is one that you probably can answer in the sense of you are the audiences, I take it, for a lot of performances for example that go on here. What we try to do at the NEA and in the research office -- and many people don't know that the NEA has a research office per se, but we do.

00:45:04 And we look at very large statistical data sets, where we collect data directly through the U.S. Census Bureau for example on how Americans participate in various arts activities. We also commission studies. We produce reports; all that stuff is up on our Web site, arts.gov/research. That's my only plug I think I'll give today. But I think just to kind of get back to your question, there is a large survey that we've conducted periodically since 1982 called the survey of public participation in the arts.

00:45:35 Matthew VanBesien: It's about every 10 years, right?

Sunil Iyengar: Yeah. Five or 10 years usually. And we're actually doing the next one in a couple months, to go out in the field for about 36,000 U.S. adults will be surveyed. And it's a representative sample of the U.S. population. So we can be sure that it reflects the general population in all its texture and totality. That said, we've been doing this since 1982 and we see -- just to put it out there, here are some numbers.

00:46:03 Twenty-six percent of Americans say they like to listen to classical music through the survey -- and this isn't just a poll or anything; this is a very high -- I feel obliged sometimes to kind of talk about how rigorous this survey is so people can understand. It's got a close to

82 percent response rate, for example -- the people who take it -- which is very high. So about 26 percent -- that's one in four -- say they like to listen to classical music.

00:46:32 Now I'm going down a bit. So 18 percent of adults -- U.S. adults in the survey -- say they view or listen to performances or broadcasts of classical music. Or they actually did do that in the last year. And then when you get down to actually attending a classical music performance -- this could be choral work, symphony, what have you, chamber music -- it's close to 9 percent.

00:47:02 Now taking the 9 percent, what we see is that that's actually a substantial reduction from what the general participation rates had been in the past. It was close to 13 percent in 1982; it's down to 9 percent in 2008, which is the most recent period we conducted the survey. As I said, we'll be conducting it again this year. On the face of it you'd say, oh; the numbers are going down. And one thing to keep in mind, though, is really the devil is in the details with all these things.

00:47:34 We look at different age groups, we look at different race/ethnicities, we look at different education level and income level, and we see some interesting patterns. While it's true that 18 to 24 year olds have seen the sharpest decline from 1982 to 2008, really in the last time we did the survey the sharpest decline from 2002 -- which is the last period -- to 2008 was experienced among those 45 through 64.

00:48:03 The two age groups wedged in there. And so there was something that happened in 2008, particularly where a lot of the people in the

baby boomer generation essentially seemed to be going much less to live classical music performance than in any previous years. And to give you a sense of it, I mean essentially they make up among the largest percentage of classical music audiences in general. That's not a myth.

00:48:28

The data do show that older adults are very heavily represented -- not to use any value judgment on this, but in terms of the statistical term, you know, they're overrepresented compared to the general population in classical music audiences. And in fact classical music audiences have been aging very rapidly compared to the general population in terms of who is going. That's just one dimension of this, but then when you look at younger adults -- okay, so they've been reducing their attendance to these events and they maybe didn't have such a high level to begin with.

00:49:01

But what's interesting here is that you see them participating in all kinds of other ways. And that's something that maybe doesn't get as much play as some of the sort of bad news. So in other words they tend to create and perform, even in classical music, at twice the rate of all adults. They make up I think one-fourth of the total pool of classical music -- people who play classical music in this country, who said in the last year they played classical music -- not necessarily professional.

00:49:30

It could include professional, but certainly mostly amateur. And so there is a vibrancy there. There is also of course the fact through social media and through -- as we were talking about -- electronic media, they're very highly represented in those people listening and

downloading and viewing classical music performances. So it's really a mixed bag in terms of some of these survey results.

Mark Clague: Let's back up to the aging audience, because that's something I hear a lot of.

00:49:56 Is it with the baby boom generation going through we have sort of this bubble of an increased number of people in that older generation. But it's also people who have -- someone who is a young parent, now that you are, you may have less time to go to symphony concerts. Just warning you. I have 16-year-old twin girls at home. You may have much less time to go to movies and symphony concerts and other things in the next decade or so than you maybe had in the last decade.

Sunil Iyengar: Right.

Mark Clague: Also as far as -- I'm certainly thinking about college education for my kids.

00:50:28 A lot of my resources will be going into very specific things, so I may cut back on going to concerts -- or have to -- for that reason. Is it a matter that the audience is aging? I mean the worry is that it ages and then passes away, right? And then we'd have no audience. Or is it that it's always a recycling, churning of this audience where it's people who have the leisure time and the disposable income to buy tickets and to attend that are the audience? Has it always been that way?

Sunil Iyengar: In the past, this age group -- there is definitely the time of life issue. No question about it.

00:50:59 In my case being a young parent, having issues -- I'm not necessarily young, but being a parent and getting a job or getting out of college and starting a career, or even further down the road when you're parents -- you're really looking after your kids and so forth. There is that issue, but there has always been that cohort of 45 to say 54, or 54 to 65 year olds in these surveys. And so at every wave of the survey they tended to participate much more strongly.

00:51:28 So I don't know -- part of it is did something happen with the advent of so much technology that it's perhaps -- to put a positive spin on it, maybe they are participating more avidly through those formats. But we don't know that for sure because so much of the technology is brand new. So we don't have great baseline data to be able to say Internet use rose dramatically in the last 20 years. I mean it's only been around --

Mark Clague: Right.

00:51:54 Sunil Iyengar: There is still a learning curve for all of us to understand that, but that said it does look like we are at a point when some of the traditional audiences are maybe not going -- I would venture to say not going as much. And it may be above and beyond the time of life issue perhaps. I mean the other question, of course, is has people's leisure time genuinely contracted over time? In which case you would argue that even though they are at that age when they might have other concerns or other things to look after, maybe they have more of them than people did in the past.

00:52:29 And that's something that -- there's actually a controversial field in time use research, if you're interested in that. Do we have more or less leisure time? Does technology enable many more outlets for participation, or is it crowding out other types of opportunities? And that's really a judgment call to some extent.

Mark Clague: Absolutely. I do want to follow up on your plug of your Web site, in part because I went there in preparation for our conversation today. There is really an incredible range of reports -- just hundreds of reports about various different arts and different activities that the NEA is involved with.

00:52:59 And the most recent one maybe we should jump into now, Audience 2.0, is talking about this technology issue, as how technology is correlated. And we've had in previous conversations here on this stage about the forum -- Mason Bates was here sort of urging the embracing of Twitter and other technologies, and he very much is doing that onstage with bringing his DJ techniques into the orchestra and combining that with traditional instruments.

00:53:23 But he was encouraging us to look at technology as a friend of audience development, rather than an enemy of the sort of concert tradition. Does your research suggest that technology use is correlated with arts participation, or not?

Sunil Iyengar: Yeah. Actually that was somewhat surprising insofar as when we conducted the study we found that -- and this was since, I should say, it's been somewhat validated or at least corroborated by

research across the pond; now I'm thinking on the West Coast, so where is the pond? East Coast. Okay.

00:53:56 So in the UK, where both the UK and we did similar studies where we found that in fact people who engage say in music, dance or theatre performances online -- viewed them -- or through other media were two to three times as likely to actually attend those kinds of performances. And they even attended at more frequent rates than those who didn't. Isn't that kind of -- maybe some of you would think, okay; that makes sense. It's participating of some kind.

00:54:24 But there are a lot of people who wouldn't think that. I mean they would have thought -- and I frankly thought -- maybe it's shutting out those kinds of activities. Well, you do see an appetite and an interest in engagement that seems to be permeating or cross-pollinating these different forms, and I think that is very hopeful, certainly. Face it; it's not just the younger adults who are doing stuff online or engaging in the new forms of technology. Far from it.

00:54:49 In fact, as older adults -- or middle-aged or older adults -- become more accustomed to freedom and moving on to a different lifestyle -- maybe literally moving from one place of the country to another -- they are going to rely more heavily on these technologies. And they certainly do to keep in touch with -- Mother's Day -- keep in touch with their family members. So I think that's something that is going to be -- that bridge is going to be extremely important. And it's also an important way of bridging urban and rural populations. You know about HD performances of opera, for example, and they've done that with symphony music.

00:55:23 I mean I think those kinds of experiences tend to reinforce, I would argue, the live actual going to a hall event. Now I'm not saying they don't require different competencies or different capacities to enjoy and appreciate those forms. I do think there is a kind of literacy of all these types of engagement, and each of them is worth its own time and effort to stake out and to listen to a Bruckner piece from the beginning to the end, for example, and not be distracted.

00:55:50 That's where we get into -- I don't know if you want to steer this conversation here, but -- arts education. It's almost a truism, but it's verified by data that those who engage in music when they're young or listen to it or are exposed to it are much more likely to actually create and to listen to and observe classical music. And that says something, especially at a time when we know sources for those kinds of offerings are dwindling. And it need not be in a formal educational setting as a school.

00:56:23 It should be, ideally, but it can also be supplemented by after-school classes or activities that occur in informal spaces, as Alan was saying, they're trying to do. So I think that's another key piece in this, is the nexus of education with all these sort of digital types of participation and on the other hand live, traditional forms.

Mark Clague: In our event today -- I did take a peek at that education report as well, and one of the intriguing ideas for me was that it didn't just look at education for kids, but also at least in its questions for future research asked about education for adults.

00:56:56 And that the correlation between adult events like today and future engagement with the arts was even higher than it is for K through 12.

Sunil Iyengar: Yes. And one thing -- it depends what audience I'm speaking to; sometimes I'm speaking to a room of statisticians. I'm telling you I love speaking with you all; let's put it that way [laughs]. But sometimes I speak with statisticians or survey methodologists and those kinds of researchy people. And this is very true: you have to be careful; when we say correlations, we know we're not talking about cause and effect, right?

00:57:25 So yes, people who do one thing are very likely to do something else, but that doesn't necessarily mean that by virtue of doing this they would automatically do the other. So the point I'm trying to make here is that nevertheless you do see very strong correlations, as you say, between having classes, learning arts education, and participating. Between engaging in digital media through the arts and on the other hand going to actual performances.

00:57:55 So there are really intriguing connections there. But we've run some really sophisticated -- more sophisticated types of analyses since, and one of the things we find is that those who do these kinds of events -- attend them, and engage in live theater, music, classical music, dance -- also are very likely to do a variety of other activities. So there is almost -- some sociologists call it the omnivore theory, because it's basically they like to do everything.

00:58:24 They really go out there and they do civic engagement in much broader ways. They tend to be two to three times as likely to

volunteer in their communities or to -- and this is what's interesting, is we just had that conversation about the softball leagues, competing New York and San Francisco softball leagues. Not to raise an old grievance.

Mark Clague: Another bitter issue for the New York Philharmonic.

Sunil Iyengar: But that said, sports and music actually do go very well together in terms of the correlations, getting back to that.

00:58:55 Those who engage in music and engage in sports. And not just music, but live arts kinds of events. So the habit of going and attending, and opening your mind and engaging in experience is very similar in both cases. It might be a completely different kind of spectacle on display, but there is sort of the acquisition of whether it's knowledge or information or experiences -- which I know can sound very -- maybe I'm sounding overly optimistic, but I know that's definitely showing through the data.

00:59:26 Mark Clague: To bring up yet another report which I have found that the title really just grabbed me right away, it was about arts and civic engagement. Investing in arts was investing in life. You found that there was a correlation between the engagement in the arts and also engagement with the community. Everything from exercise, as you pointed out, but also community service. Willingness to volunteer. That people were involved, and they were there with their neighbors and participating in their community.

00:59:54 Sunil Iyengar: And what's really interesting about that is when you control for things like education, income, race/ethnicity,

age, and so forth -- gender -- you find that in fact someone's likelihood to volunteer -- in fact, attending a live arts performance is a much higher predictor than many other variables of someone's likelihood to volunteer. And that connection seems to me -- sometimes people who work in the arts forget about that. I mean forget how much of our armies are run by volunteers, right?

01:00:23

I mean we're out there with volunteer staffs a lot of times. They're often engaged in many, many ways. I'm sure there are many here who volunteer here. It doesn't necessarily mean that they only volunteer in the arts. I think there is a crossover effect that seems to be happening. And so getting back to what Alan was saying about his hopes for the Philharmonic being -- and I think it's borne this out -- being a kind of institution that is a resource for the community and the city.

01:00:48

That's something that we should all collectively think about, those institutions we revere and like a lot, like the symphony hall, because they have the potential to be a kind of hotbed for those kinds of activities that are much more beneficial to the broader community than people would think at first blush. And wouldn't necessarily associate music with all these ancillary kind of positive experiences and activities.

Mark Clague:

Do you find a lot of difference in participation either across different ethnic groups or across gender?

Sunil Iyengar:

Classical music specifically, it's interesting because actually -- a little caveat here.

01:01:24 The census has these categories by which they classify people by race and ethnicity, and so we basically adhere to those. So they have a category called Other, which I know doesn't sound great, but is essentially largely made up of Asian Americans. And that group actually is among -- actually they're the most likely to listen to classical music or view through electronic media. It's one in four, I believe. Sorry; it's 24 percent.

01:01:54 Twenty-four percent, I believe, of Asian Americans say they do that in the last year. So that means at least a few times in the last year. And also they are very likely to create classical music, whether it's performing or rehearsing or whatever other means. And of course they go to these events, also, in high numbers. Now I'm only mentioning that because we were talking about race and ethnicity. But also the other culturally -- there are a lot of culturally specific programming that tends to attract different types of groups.

01:02:27 So for example I think if you saw that study about electronic media and the arts -- digital media and the arts -- Latin music definitely drew by far the highest percentages of -- Hispanic or Latino Americans were among the highest group represented in listeners to that kind of music. In live spaces. So I think there is a very interesting kind of correlation between -- which we're still getting our hands around in terms of culturally specific programming and a broader group of the general population.

01:03:01 I think in many cases it speaks to sort of the ecumenical quality of this music, and what a great sort of tradition it is -- a live tradition that manages to bring in people from so many different cultures and backgrounds, and in some cases it's not necessarily what you would

think offhand. I mean as I said, Asian Americans were the ones who were most likely to do these things versus say whites, for example.

01:03:29 Mark Clague: What about gender? Are men and women equally participating?

Sunil Iyengar: No. Unfortunately, men tend to much less. I don't have the numbers right on me. And maybe if you look -- not so much here; I see a pretty good mix, but sometimes that might be true -- I mean I know that a lot of men who do participate are often brought by their spouses, according to some of the research. I don't want to make too fine a point on these kinds of data.

01:03:54 Because we all know that there are always exceptions. None of this can be used -- this is kind of the broad stroke to classify classical music audiences. So that's why I kind of turned to you all first and said you know who you are, right? But what I'm doing is looking at the national level with a bunch of statistics and saying according to the data this is what we're seeing. And it does seem very lopsided right now in terms of males and females. And I don't really think that's new, necessarily, in terms of what we've seen historically.

01:04:25 Now when you're talking about creating music, I don't know if it's any different, either.

Mark Clague: It seems like the data I saw suggested it was more equal. And that was one of the positive things I saw in the data, was that with technology it was inviting people to participate in the arts. To write poetry and share it online, or to compose a piece of music in Garage Band and upload themselves performing it to YouTube. So that

there is also a blending. We talked about creativity in our last American Orchestra with the Maverick series.

01:04:55 And it seemed like technology was also enabling and inviting a deeper relationship -- or participatory relationship, anyway -- rather than just a listening.

Sunil Iyengar: Right. And in fact, Mark raises an interesting point because we almost have gotten used to a dichotomy of thinking about arts participation as either going or doing something through media and abroad --

Mark Clague: Consuming.

Sunil Iyengar: Consuming or creating. And there is this whole other kind of -- I wouldn't even call it a subculture; I think it's something we all do, which is sharing.

01:05:27 And being a sort of curator of art, right? Or a collector. In other words, increasingly people are sending people links and commenting on work as it's coming out, and I do believe very strongly in the need for arts journalism and solid critiquing and all of that. But I'm also saying that there is something very vibrant and exciting about the way in which citizens are taking it upon themselves to share and comment and editorialize about work that they like and share it with each other.

01:05:58 And using this new technology to do that. Now that's kind of a given; we all know that, because we probably do it to some extent. But it's useful to see when you see the raw numbers, that that's

actually how heavily represented different types of groups are. People who normally wouldn't necessarily participate in other ways are reflected in those numbers.

Mark Clague: Certainly as a music professor at the University of Michigan School of Music, one of the puzzlements I have is that I hear this data about lack of participation.

01:06:26 And then I see the ever-increasing numbers of applications that we're receiving. I would expect that the number of kids being interested -- if education in the schools has dropped, there wouldn't be as many good violin players applying to study, or that people wouldn't be interested because maybe they wouldn't be aware. You know, fearful that it wouldn't provide them a stable career or whatever. But it actually -- at least anecdotally, of the schools of music I know -- our applications are really through the roof.

Sunil Iyengar: And you know, you're not alone.

01:06:54 Full disclosure, I went to the University of Michigan, too. But seriously, I think this is very true. Because when you look at Department of Education data, you actually see that fine arts degrees are outpacing all degrees as a whole. When you look at all college degrees, in terms of the majors conferred. You know, when the degree is conferred to the fine arts, including classical music types of art and so forth.

01:07:23 And it does suggest a growing kind of hunger or demand, perhaps, among a certain group of the population -- those who are maybe leaving college or starting to -- or at least those in the college age

group, I should say. But then you wonder, do they go the traditional route? I mean traditional in the sense that did they all experience arts education to the same degree? Did they go to symphony performances? How did they get that interest in it? And I don't think we know that yet. And that's something I'd love to know, just kind of qualitatively, forgetting the numbers for a moment.

01:07:54 Just knowing people who now are majoring in those things, do they -- would you consider them the kinds of people who you would see here at a performance? Or are they a completely different section of the American public, part of that 26 percent who loves classical music who doesn't come, who would maybe come here?

Mark Clague: I would just give my impression, but I think they're pretty omnivorous, to use your term.

Sunil Iyengar: Yes.

Mark Clague: I mean in the sense that they are interested in a lot of different arts. They are interested in the connection between dance and theater and music.

01:08:25 They're interested in film, and they're interested in video games. They're really seeing music as a boundary-less space, as opposed to the kind of training I had a couple decades before, which classical was a little -- I mean it's still classically based training, and I think there is a strength to that, but they're also -- I think the walls are more permeable or lower than they once were. But I wonder, I guess, to follow up on this, if we [brought you on] -- I mean

Matthew, who just became executive director of the New York Philharmonic.

01:08:53 If some orchestra snapped you up and wanted you to be their new executive director -- given this mixed picture and some rather daunting data, where do you think are the possibilities? Is there growth possible? Do you see where that's coming from? What would you do, if you were running an arts institution today?

Sunil Iyengar: You don't want me to do that. But seriously, I actually think -- well, that's a flattering question, but I also think it's a very interesting one for us all to think about. And I guess one thing I would just say is in a way, location, location, location.

01:09:26 I mean it's not only in the beautiful halls like this one, where this kind of music has to flourish. It has to be out on the street. It could be a subway platform. It could be any number of venues, and more creative people than I can think of. And it has been done, and it is being done. But I really do think it's like -- you know, it's almost like a marketing thing. You want to get the music out there to people who really have the capacity to perhaps start appreciating it.

01:09:55 And learning about how to appreciate it. It can be done through the formal routes of education that's in the school setting. It could be done through informal education. And I think it's kind of -- it calls for maybe more community partnerships than have ever perhaps gone before historically. So one of the things we do at the NEA is we've just started a group called the Arts in Human Development Task Force, where it's basically 15 federal agencies including the

Department of Health, Department of Education, and many other groups are with us.

01:10:27 And we're looking at ways to make the arts -- integrate the arts in programming around health and human development. Because there are many programs for older adults and for younger people where the arts have been used not just instrumentally but actually holistically as part of either a healing environment or a learning environment to foster skills that are lifelong skills. So when Alan says he'd love to have audiences -- to win the trust of people throughout their lives, who come back and keep coming, it's almost like that with the arts at large.

01:10:57 You want lifelong engagement with the arts to happen in the general public, so that you achieve all these spillover benefits that are very much part and parcel of what the arts are about. Creation, empathy, imagination, intelligence -- all these things that we know are in the arts. And so I guess what I'm saying is it requires much more connection with different types of organizations, and I love the idea that we're going to hear from somebody who has a background in sports arena -- literally.

01:11:26 You know, to be able to kind of talk a little bit about this. But I think the connection between -- sort of across the aisle, to other organizations that may in fact bring in new constituencies is very, very important. And the informal environment, as I would call it, is a great way to do that.

Mark Clague: We may take just a couple questions, if there is somebody who has something coming up, but I just wanted as a concluding remark to

just tie that together. And I do think a lot of this will come up in the larger panel later with Brent and Matthew and others.

01:11:58 But the issue you raise, as far as music's larger contributions to the community not only are in that report about arts and civic engagement, but really started here with our conversation with Gustavo Dudamel in very first American Orchestra Forum, where we were talking about El Sistema, which is in effect an anti-poverty public health initiative which just happens to be putting 300,000 kids into music education programs.

01:12:24 So there really is a connection, and I think that's -- a lot of what's driving us all is that we had this experience and know that it did so much to us. I mean I know I joined a youth symphony when I was in junior high, and that gave me a group of friends, and it gave me a place to belong, and just a spiritual kind of awakening. When I ask myself that question, about why are so many students coming to study music, I think in part it's because it provides that spiritual sustenance at a time when everything seems to be so fragmented.

01:12:59 And the public's fear is sort of warring with itself, in a sense, that's so atomized and pushed apart that music gives us something as human beings that we can't get other ways. And clearly these kids who are devoting their life to it, and all have this dream that they'll be on the stage -- they're not all going to fit on the stage. And I know that, and they know that.

01:13:23 But there is a dream and a passion that they bring to what they're doing, which we certainly believe is going to prepare them for the future in a really positive way.

Sunil Iyengar: And there is a rigor, and sort of excellence. Which I know sometimes people don't like that word, because it implies that there is some kind of cannon looming over us. But it's true. This is like artistic excellence and innovation that's all embedded in these qualities of these students for example. And I think orchestras excel at that; the best ones do.

01:13:52 And I think that's the kind of -- those kinds of values and virtues that you want to radiate to other domains of interest.

Mark Clague: A lot of that experimentation is happening here. Did any of you participate in the Community of Music Makers event? A couple of you. Yeah, that's really a fantastic project that's happening here, first with a choral experience and then with orchestra, and then chamber music I think is coming up, where members of the community have worked side by side with people in the orchestra to make music. And I think that's really fantastic.

01:14:22 And Michael Tilson Thomas of course also works with the New World Symphony in Miami, and they're doing a lot of the kind of experimentation we saw onstage here last night with the Barbary Coast and beyond performance with the screen and the multiple performers and really bending genres -- literally -- with a musical saw. I have to think that that draws upon a similar kind of energy that he is getting from the experiments with our projecting the concert on the outside wall of the concert hall, and families are coming. You know, not having to keep the kids corralled in their seat.

01:14:55 And not having to spend the money on tickets, but they can have a great evening dinner, and bring the family together -- which of course is something that now with the issues of time you were talking about before; you know, the fact that both parents often work. And if we can use our institutions as ways to solve new problems that our communities have, I think we'll have that continuation of this ability.

And when Alan said it's really about what does an orchestra mean? What is an orchestra about? You know, that's really what's driving his relationship with his audience.

01:15:25 I think that's one of the things we have to challenge ourselves to do, is really to remember the core values of what an orchestra can do, and the kind of strength it brings to our communities. And we can find ways to make that work for our audience today, we'll be in pretty good shape.

Sunil Iyengar: Yeah, that's great. Question?

Audience Member: Jerry Parsons. I'm excited that you talked about education and getting out to the community.

01:15:54 I sit on a school board, and I'm the president of my school board. And so the people here in this room -- I don't know if they're all from the state of California, but that's one item that is not really funded. And so my school district has made it a priority to educate our children in the arts, and so we still have it from first grade through 12th grade. My question to you would be how do I work

with the different symphonies or whoever it may be so that I can get that at the local level?

01:16:27 So that I can keep our children engaged in what you're doing. And I've got to be honest with you; I'm a new volunteer here. I'm really nervous being up here. And it's because I actually want to learn, at 43. I've never even been to a symphony.

Sunil Iyengar: I strongly encourage you to talk to people who are much more knowledgeable than me about this particular venue.

01:16:54 For example, the opportunities that are abounding around this area. I think it has to start with that. And I think what you're doing sounds tremendously valuable. I have to say also that we did release something just a month ago or so, where we found that even in the most at-risk student populations -- in fact especially in those populations -- having had an arts education made a world of a difference later in life.

01:17:25 Because we track those same kids over years and years and year through these very large data sets. And it's amazing. It happens in terms of their grades -- I don't want to overstate things as a researcher, but this was something where we really looked very hard at it. It was grades, it was in terms of their engagement in other activities, other school activities -- which that engagement transfers into academic engagement a lot of times, as you can imagine.

01:17:51 And of course as you were saying volunteering in their communities, and doing something positive. And even later in life, in terms of their job outcomes, there seemed to be some thread

going through -- even after looking at other factors in this very low socioeconomic status background. But to get back to your question, I would just strongly encourage you to talk to people here about what you can do positively with your school board. At the NEA, we're in Washington but we try to get out and go to these places.

01:18:21 And the NEA has a very small amount of funding for arts education compared to say the Department of Education. And even that, we would all agree, is probably -- there are probably more opportunities, let's just say, for more across the board funding for this kind of stuff. But I would hopefully speak to other people and get some ideas that way.

Mark Clague: Statistics do play an important role, though, I think; in some ways it's easy to give someone an SAT test, right? Which has math and verbal scores, and to be able to sort of judge whether a school system is succeeding or not.

01:18:54 The measurements for arts participation are maybe a little bit more tricky. Do we say that everybody needs to play a certain scale on the clarinet at a certain speed? That's not something that's universal. But the kind of skills it leads to -- so. I remember hearing an anecdote about a community where the major employer in town just put a line on a job application that says, "What's your experience in the arts?" And suddenly the schoolteachers in that town had something to really point to, to say that what they did was important.

01:19:22 Sunil Iyengar: And actually -- I take it back. There is something we can do, which is I would be happy to meet with you

afterward if you want to give me your address or something -- and this goes for anyone -- and we can send you some reports that may be valuable for decision makers that you're trying to convince, or talk about the value of the arts in your community. Because we have a lot of that information, hopefully readily understandable to people so they can pick it up. We actually mailed some of those reports to school superintendents across the nation because we want it to land on their desk.

01:19:53 And our chairman said he wanted it to land on their desk and make an influence in their decisions.

Mark Clague: But yeah; if you have to argue as a school board president that this is important, the data that Sunil has amassed is a good place to go. The reports are actually pretty accessible, and they're quite substantive.

Sunil Iyengar: Yeah. And there are all kinds of versions.

Mark Clague: They're a hundred pages long. But there's a little --

[Crosstalk]

Sunil Iyengar: There's executive summary. There's like brochure versions. There are online versions. There are a lot of -- we're trying to improve that section of our site. But I'd be happy to give people as much as they would like.

01:20:23 And no more than you would like.

Mark Clague: Thank you so much for your great conversation.

Sunil Iyengar: Thank you.

[Applause]

[End of recorded material]