

## **National Instrumentalist Mentoring and Advancement Network (NIMAN)**

### Post Convening Webinars

*This meeting was offered twice with the same agenda to accommodate availability.*

Date: January 7, 2020      Time: 11:30am-12:30pm ET

Date: January 9, 2020      Time: 11:30am-12:30pm ET

Location: Zoom Meeting

#### **Attendees January 7th:**

Ahmad Mayes - Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Alexa Smith - Manhattan School of Music

Stanford Thompson - Play On Philly

Stef Wakeman - Astral Artists

#### **Attendees January 9th:**

Larry Bomback - The Curtis Institute of Music

Carol Dunevant - Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Susan Lape - Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra

Ahmad Mayes - Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Stanford Thompson - Play On Philly

Leslie Wu Foley - Boston Symphony Orchestra

---

## **MINUTES**

1. Stan opened the meeting and thanked the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (CSO) for being wonderful hosts for the Convening. We are very grateful to have their support. Thank you.
2. A full, detailed report on the Convening is available on the niman.org website. Stan will reference this report throughout the meeting. Please take the time to review this report for a comprehensive summary of the convening.
3. Over 45 professionals convened representing community music schools, professional orchestras, summer festivals, collegiate programs and pre-professional training institutes.
4. Stan reviewed the Convening Agenda:
  - a. Understanding who is in the room and what impact your organization is having on the trajectory of underrepresented musicians in classical music;

- b. Providing updates from our four working groups about the brainstorming they accomplished in preparation for this convening;
  - c. Taking inventory of resources the field has, and underrepresented musicians need, by looking at the gaps of engagement and prioritize support that NIMAN may want to create, coordinate and/or communicate for musicians of color;
  - d. Identifying who may already have those resources in order to determine how they could be enhanced; what steps we may need to take to create those opportunities; or envision the role NIMAN could play in aligning multiple organizations in and across different phases of musical development;
  - e. Making final recommendations to the NIMAN Leadership Team about specific steps they will need to take to get this network off the ground in the new year and upcoming season.
5. The Leadership Team will meet later this month to assess recommendations in preparation for the public launch at SphinxConnect on February 6th.
6. We framed the Convening around what we are calling the “Bridge Concept”. The journey along the Bridge has five phases: 1)Entry and Early Years, 2) High School and Pre-College, 3) College/Conservatory, 4) Pre-Professional, and 5) Young Professional.
7. For each phase on the Bridge there are five needs that must be fulfilled in order to help propel the musician to the next phase (in no order of priority):
  - a. Psychological and Behavioral Preparation— to mentally prepare musicians of color to navigate obstacles that disproportionately affect them
  - b. Technical Training—to ensure mastery of the fundamental building blocks of professional musicianship
  - c. Logistical and Financial—family support and high costs
  - d. Organizational—is there a culture of equity and alignment present in the organizations the musician of color seek to inhabit
  - e. Talent Identification and Opportunities—identifying, evaluation and recruiting musicians of color
8. The Convening opened with a beautiful, inspiring performance by 16 year old cellist Daniel Dorsey. He has been studying at the CSYO Nouveau Pre-Conservatory for three years. Daniel has the work ethic, drive, determination and talent to complete the span of the Bridge. He is an example of someone NIMAN could help along the way.
9. Panel Discussion Takeaways:
  - a. Three local, Cincinnati musicians participated on the panel.

- b. Access is key to getting started
- c. Mentorship is key to becoming competitive
- d. Overcoming personal hurdles are just as important to address as musical ones
- e. Panelists valued opportunities to excel/be pushed in college
- f. Panelists all had a single focus - to successfully audition into an orchestra. There was no plan B.
- g. Panelists encouraged NIMAN to build accountability in the field, facilitate transitions between phases, connect musicians with mentors and align local DEI initiatives across the Bridge.
- h. Keynote Address Takeaways:
  - i. Maestro Thomas Wilkins, Music Director of the Omaha Symphony
  - ii. Musicians need advocates and our organizations are best positioned to do this. We need to not just open doors, but help musicians through those doors.
  - iii. "Taking the next step to greener pastures will help propel them forward." he said. "However, the grass is greener where you water it and aspiring musicians at all levels need careful and consistent nourishment."

#### 10. Review of Working Groups Progress:

- a. Program
  - i. "Bridge Visits": Connecting and empowering faculty, parents and alumni with one another in order to share information about summer programs and colleges.
  - ii. Database of musicians and opportunities to develop a data-driven approach to align resources in the field and connecting musicians to them. Questions: How will we use it? How do we ensure privacy?
  - iii. Parent Support Group: Organizations can not do all the work and parents will need to take an active role in their early development and middle years.
- b. By-Laws
  - i. We are still considering a possible name change for the association: the National Association for the Advancement of Musicians of Color
  - ii. January 7: Alexa asked if this organization might someday serve vocalists not just orchestral instrumentalists. Stan responded that we may want to embrace an association name that wouldn't limit us in the future and that the association could grow to advocate for vocalist, pianist, conductors, composers and other instrumentalists.

- iii. Purpose of the association:
  - 1. Increasing the collective impact of services delivered by constituent members.
  - 2. Promoting shared standards of operational performance.
  - 3. Creating opportunities for learning and evaluation.
  - 4. Creating vehicles for shared action.
  - 5. Creating vehicles for shared advocacy.
- iv. Mission:
  - 1. Musician focused
  - 2. Excellence includes diversity and inclusivity (in addition to technical and musical mastery). How do we broaden the definition of excellence?
- v. Membership Classification:
  - 1. Active Organizations - Organizations currently engaged in the training and/or mentoring of underrepresented musicians.
  - 2. Supporting Organizations & Individuals - Organizations and individuals who are committed to removing barriers to access for musicians from underrepresented ethnicities and dedicated to diversity, inclusion and equity, but do not have a project, concept, initiative or goal at any phase of a musician's development with associated human and financial resources.
- vi. 17-22 board members with a percentage of core and honorary directors representative of:
  - 1. Various types of organizations we serve
  - 2. Steps in the musical development pathway
  - 3. Mix of races, sex, creed, age, etc.
  - 4. Geographical regions of the US
  - 5. January 7: Alexa asked if the 17-22 would include artistic professionals? Stan replied that the board members wouldn't necessarily be artistic professionals, but representatives of organizations or have certain skill sets, networks and resources helpful to the association.
  - 6. January 7: Ahmad asked what type of meeting structure we envision for a national Board? How frequently to meet etc.? Stan replied that in the first year we could expect up to 6 meetings as there will be a great deal of work to launch the association. We will transition to quarterly meetings as the

work diminishes. Most meetings will be via video with perhaps the annual meeting being held in-person during an annual convening.

7. January 7: Stef asked if there has been any consideration of a Youth or Parent Advisory Board? Stan replied that this concept has not come up but we will add for consideration. Stef commented that with highly collaborative work it is helpful to have representation from the musicians we seek to serve. This can add a richness to the visioning.

c. Ratification:

- i. Please read the Convening Report for full details on this group's work.
- ii. Outlines values members need to share, qualities of membership types, dues, and member benefits.
- iii. We need to be clear about the values we have as an association and how they bind us together.

d. Implementation Group:

- i. Looking for an incubator organization. The group is emphasizing the importance an incubator would play in getting the association off the ground. The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra is interested in playing this role. We will need paid staff at the onset.
- ii. There will be a Managing Director in place for the first couple of years until we have the resources to hire an Executive Director.
- iii. We will need at least \$250K to launch the initiative.
- iv. Why organizations would want to join the association:
  1. To help facilitate the mission and vision of the organization
  2. Because it aligns with their beliefs
  3. It addresses the pathway from beginning to end
  4. Radical collaborate and move the field forward
  5. A forum to address structural inequities
  6. Networking component is an outlet for conversations

11. January 9: Leslie asked if there was discussion about the definition of what a professional musician looks like. Stan replied, yes, it is defined as supporting yourself by performing and not limited to having a position in an orchestra. Leslie asked if this includes educators? Stan replied, no, this is all performance based. There are other pathways for educators. We are staying focused on performing in classical music. Ahmad commented that educators could be members to leverage the benefit to their students. We would encourage that membership.

12. January 9: Leslie asked if we are still looking for help with the Working Groups. Stan replied that the working group phase is completed. But as we launch, there will be task forces created and opportunities there.

13. Resource Exercise:

- a. Using the Bridge Matrix we took a look at the resources articulated by the musicians as needed. Where are there gaps. See pgs. 24 and 25 of the report. We had groups rank where NIMAN should get involved.
- b. It is important that we do not duplicate efforts. We primarily want to encourage organizations to launch new/expanded programs and believe NIMAN could strategically develop initiatives in partnership with member organizations that are best suited for a national organization to do. Pgs. 26-31 summarizes the discussion around what this could look like.

14. Final Thoughts:

- a. Success looks like a greater diversification of underrepresented musicians in the profession of classical music.
- b. Additional stakeholders need to be at the table.
- c. More research and evaluation is needed. Comprehensive evaluation and research of current initiatives barely exist. Like the recent League of American Orchestras report on orchestral fellowship programs, we should not wait 40 years to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives being replicated across the country.
- d. Organizational structures must balance members individual accountability with the capacity to engage.
- e. NIMAN can enhance and increase capacity in providing information on best practices, compiling student information and fostering relationships among and across organizations.
- f. Our primary goal is to provide tools for underrepresented musicians to negotiate and navigate existing classical music pathways and procedures while simultaneously striving to permanently remove barriers.
- g. January 7: Ahmad commented that we are focusing on how to create a clear vision. We'll strike a delicate balance between firm but open as we approach our launch so we keep the buy-in momentum moving forward.
- h. January 7: Alexa asked, what are the biggest items to get more detail on before SphinxConnect? Stan replied that this all needs to be in one document. It will help people understand that there was a lengthy planning process. It would be great to do everything but we need to work within the resources we will have available. We hope that after Detroit people will be able to go onto the website and sign-up. After that, we

need to ratify by-laws and create the Board. Next, we will need to finish raising money and hire a Managing Director.

- i. January 7: Alexa commented that the report is impressive and very helpful if you were not able to attend.
- j. Stan commented that we will repeat this call on Thursday. We will compile minutes from both calls and create one set for distribution. If you have any other feedback please email me. At the end of next week we will send information to the Leadership Team.
- k. January 9: Stan asked Carol and Ahmad for final thoughts.
  - i. Ahmad was very impressed by the turnout and participation. Do we know how many participants did so on their own time? Did they need travel support? Stan replied that twelve people of forty-seven requested aid. After travel and hotel it amounted to approximately \$8000. It did demonstrate that organizations were willing to make time and sacrifices.
  - ii. Ahmad is interested to hear about follow-up. Was there a survey. Stan, replied that there was no survey but people were invited twice for feedback. Stan heard only positive comments and praise for CSO hosting.
- l. January 9: Larry - In reference to the opening cellist and other students like him - With organizations like PMAY and BEAM, nationally what is the size of the cohort? Is there a plan to start tracking that cohort. Really being able to prove the concept of the Bridge could be very valuable. Stan replied that none of that is in place right now. We have not had conversations yet about something that detailed. It would be costly in terms of resources but would help us form a case to funders. There were enough people in the room at the Convening to pave the way for David right now. The framing was that we could make this happen. But tracking would be valuable. Across the country there may be a handful of Daniels in major cities. How do we create more Daniels? There are programs trying to address this now. We could begin tracking that work which could lead to tracking students like Daniel. We hope that our colleagues will be open to helping collect this information but at this moment we do not know. We are hoping that NIMAN will make this clear.
- m. January 9: Leslie asked if there is a conservatory on the Leadership Team. Stan replied, yes, Peabody.