Statement in response to the murder of George Floyd

“Our city and our nation are in anguish, catalyzed by systemic injustice and inequality. Violence against Black citizens, perpetuated by individuals and institutions, betrays the interlocking covenants to build an equitable society, and to serve and protect. The range of emotions we are experiencing—fear, anger, sadness, confusion—has once again been laid bare and must be addressed.

The mission of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra is to seek and share inspiration and at its essence, the CSO exists to serve our community. Our entire community.

At this crossroads, the question has become “How can we best serve?” In the past we have responded to tragedy with the inspirational, healing power of music, and we will continue to use that power. As racism and inequity continue to plague our nation, however, it is clear that music isn’t enough. Words are not enough.

Where do we go from here? We must go forward with an evolving purpose to continue to fulfill our longstanding mission.

We see you. We hear you. We realize we must do better, and today we reaffirm our commitment to push for justice and equality, elevate and broaden our role as a voice of positive change, and amplify the voices of those who can help us realize that change.”

2019 CSO Strategic Plan: Mission and Vision

Mission: To seek and share inspiration.
Vision: To be the most relevant orchestra in America.

2019 CSO Strategic Plan: DE&I Goal & Objectives

Goal:
- To better reflect our community and the world at every level – on stage, behind the scenes, and in neighborhoods throughout the region.

Objectives:

1. Double underrepresented audiences to 8% by 2025.
2. Achieve 14% BIPOC representation at CSO auditions by 2025.
3. To ensure that the representation of women/non-binary and BIPOC composers, conductors, and other guest artists on CSO programs will meet or exceed that of the 2019/20 season when measured in five-year increments.
4. Increase Board diversity to 20% Black/Latinx by 2025.
5. Diversify staff to better reflect the community.
6. Diversify volunteer base to better reflect the community.
7. Incubate in Cincinnati and launch a national consortium of orchestras, conservatories and schools to develop increased talent pool of underrepresented musicians.
8. Explore the creation of an *El Sistema* program in at least one underrepresented Cincinnati neighborhood.
9. Launch a funded summer parks concerts with a focus on underrepresented neighborhoods.

**Summary of Existing DE&I-Focused Initiatives**

- **CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship**: a dual-track performance fellowship/graduate-level degree program for exceptional string players from backgrounds that are underrepresented in classical music. Fellows receive full tuition, cost-of-living stipend, and professional performance opportunities with the CSO. *The CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship is made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Patricia Kisker Foundation.*

- **NIMAN**: with the CSO as host and incubator, the National Instrumentalist Mentoring and Advancement Network (NIMAN) is a national association of organizations committed to furthering equity and opportunities for aspiring classical musicians from underrepresented ethnicities with the goal of creating a level playing field for all musicians.

- **Nouveau Program**: supports increased participation in classical music by Black and Latinx student musicians by providing equitable opportunities for intensive music study and performance. *The Nouveau Program is supported by The Links, Incorporated – Queen City, OH Chapter, The Wohlgemuth Herschede Foundation, D’Addario Foundation, and the Multicultural Awareness Council (MAC).*

- **Classical Roots**: a celebration of the rich legacy of African American music, Classical Roots includes the annually sold-out spring concert at Music Hall, the Classical Roots Community Mass Choir, and its Community and Clergy Advisory Committee. *The Classical Roots program is made possible in part by funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. The CSO extends its thanks to the generous Classical Roots sponsors for their support.*

- **DE&I Committee**: this CSO Board committee oversees the advancement of objectives and strategies that support the Orchestra’s goal to reflect and welcome the diversity of our community on our stage, in our audiences, in our offices and on our Board.
- **Multicultural Awareness Council (MAC):** In its 31st year, MAC is a diverse volunteer committee helps to support and increase awareness of CSO programming by hosting special events and receptions, volunteering at concerts and providing guidance for CSO DE&I initiatives.

  - **MAC Award:** an annual award, recognizing community arts leaders who have demonstrated a commitment to inclusion.

  - **MAC Music Innovator:** a residency program highlighting African American classical musicians who embody artistry, innovation and a commitment to education and community engagement.

- **Inclusion Content Team:** a cross-departmental digital content team created to assist in the review of DE&I content and help brainstorm and implement inclusive content ideas.

- **Neighborhood Connection:** strategic partnerships developed to help strengthen the CSO’s relationship with our neighbors in the West End and other underrepresented neighborhoods throughout Cincinnati.

- **CSOne:** an employee resource group with a focus on DE&I, created to foster greater employee retention and professional development opportunities.

- **Sound Discoveries:** a school residency program in partnership with CPS that provides music integration learning at schools with desired increases in music enrichment.

  *Sound Discoveries is made possible in part by state tax dollars allocated by the Ohio Legislature to the Ohio Arts Council, the William P. Anderson Foundation, and the YOT Full Circle Foundation.*

- **Melody Contest Commissions:** a program that annually commissions works from new and rising composers, in partnership with CCM, for CSO Young People’s Concerts.

- **Norman Johns Chair Award:** a talent-based award to cover the cost of CSYO tuition given annually to support BIPOC students and their pursuit of orchestral music.

- **National Alliance for Audition Support membership:** a national initiative led by The Sphinx Organization to increase diversity in American orchestras through national mentorship, intensive audition training and financial support.

- **League of American Orchestras Catalyst Fund Grant Program:** the CSO was awarded a two-year grant to engage with skilled DE&I practitioners to foster and advance effective DE&I practices.