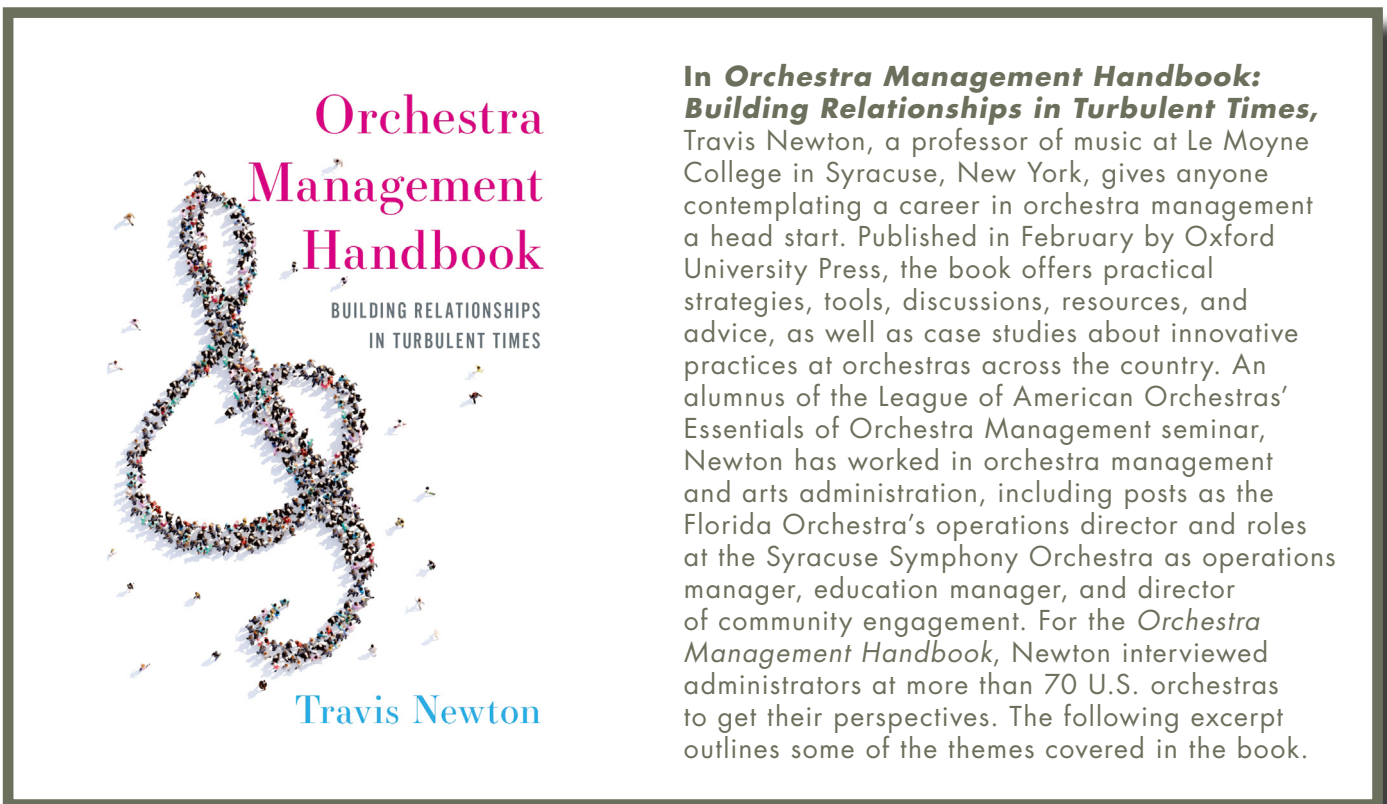


# LEADING PERSPECTIVES

What do orchestra managers need to succeed today? A new book by Travis Newton, *Orchestra Management Handbook: Building Relationships in Turbulent Times*, offers a guide to a career in this demanding, rewarding field.



**In *Orchestra Management Handbook: Building Relationships in Turbulent Times*,** Travis Newton, a professor of music at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, gives anyone contemplating a career in orchestra management a head start. Published in February by Oxford University Press, the book offers practical strategies, tools, discussions, resources, and advice, as well as case studies about innovative practices at orchestras across the country. An alumnus of the League of American Orchestras' Essentials of Orchestra Management seminar, Newton has worked in orchestra management and arts administration, including posts as the Florida Orchestra's operations director and roles at the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra as operations manager, education manager, and director of community engagement. For the *Orchestra Management Handbook*, Newton interviewed administrators at more than 70 U.S. orchestras to get their perspectives. The following excerpt outlines some of the themes covered in the book.

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**T**hroughout the course of any given day, an orchestra manager can, and will, be faced with challenges from all sides—a board member who needs attention and guidance, a music director whose schedule has been upended by another orchestra, a patron who was spoken to rudely by an usher at the prior weekend's concert, a donor who has been cultivated for months whose gift is anticipated but not yet received, a staff member who receives an attractive job offer at another organization but is a tremendous asset to the orchestra.

Or: a global pandemic that immediately halts the act of gathering large groups together indoors—the very mechanism

that has historically enabled orchestras to deliver value to their communities.

Many of these challenges, whether short-term, long-term, internal, external, or existential, have faced orchestra managers since the beginning of the art form, and they will continue to face those who make the orchestra enterprise their life's work, alongside new challenges that will arise in the 21st century. For example, increased awareness of systemic racism in the United States has recently prompted orchestras to examine their policies, practices, and assumptions, and these efforts are highly relevant to each and every aspect of orchestra man-



Travis Newton, author of *Orchestra Management Handbook: Building Relationships in Turbulent Times*.

agement. This book aims to not only be a resource to those in the field who need practical tools; it will also provide a unifying framework, encouraging orchestra managers to conceptualize these challenges holistically...

Effectively establishing, nurturing, maintaining, growing, and deepening relationships leads to what orchestra managers need most—*trust*.... In both our personal and professional lives, we know that trust is gained over time, when it is clear to both parties that the other side has *earned* their trust—in other words, they are *trustworthy*.

When viewed through this relationship-oriented lens with trust as the desired outcome, it becomes quite clear to orchestra managers why it makes no sense to expect someone who has

**Increased awareness of systemic racism in the United States has recently prompted orchestras to examine their policies, practices, and assumptions, and these efforts are highly relevant to every aspect of orchestra management.**

purchased one ticket to a concert to become a multi-concert subscriber soon thereafter; why it takes multiple years and perhaps a dozen points of contact to move a donor toward making a gift; why successful board recruitment and training doesn't happen overnight; why an appeal to the community to "save the music" is not well received by those who don't think the orchestra is for them; and why musicians may question the motives of a manager who only talks to them during negotiations, or when they *need* something.

What today's orchestra managers understand is that trust must be earned through diligent relationship building. Those leading and working within orchestras desperately need this trust in order to lead effectively. It is necessary when communicating honestly with a music director about the inherent challenges of artistic planning as related to financial constraints; when keeping underpaid and overworked staff members engaged; when encouraging a board of directors to govern strategically, rather than tactically; and when leading important conversations about moving the orchestra toward relevance as an asset to the *entire* community, not just to the privileged few.

The orchestra field in the United States is currently engaged in a reckoning over its history as a mostly white and elitist art form. As will be explored in Chapter 9, these efforts constitute an overdue (and welcome) shift in the field, and they will take time to fully take hold. What has been made clear from numerous field leaders (the League of American Orchestras, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Sphinx Organization, and others) is that these important efforts must be sustained over the long term. In short, this work is instigating a tectonic shift in the industry, reinforcing that in addition to *being* good, orchestras must also *do* good.

Meanwhile, orchestra leaders have recently been confronted with the horrors of the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from the tragic loss of life and unknown long-term health impacts on those infected with the virus, the pandemic has upended the entire arts ecosystem, including the core operations of orchestras—live concerts performed indoors for large

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crowds of people. Many orchestras have responded to this challenge by innovating and adapting, and as of this writing, the League of American Orchestras is not aware of any orchestra going out of business due to the virus.

Building and sustaining internal and external relationships has been (and will continue to be) orchestras' most important task in addressing both of these systemic challenges. Confronting and adapting long-established cultures and traditions will mean questioning a myriad of assumptions and rebuilding internal and external relationships, as well as initiating new relationships with those who may not feel that orchestral music is "for them." Revamping business models and content delivery in response to COVID-19 (as many orchestras have already done) requires renewed internal alignment in order to reach audience and community members in different ways. Thus, effective and intentional relationship building is a recurring theme in this book.

Any seasoned orchestra manager will state that much of the knowledge and skills needed in this field is gained through practical, hands-on experience, and this is absolutely true. In order to support this work, each chapter of this handbook will provide practical strategies, tools, and a variety of resources to those who work in the orchestra management field, with an emphasis on relationship building throughout. Illustrative case studies highlighting innovative practices being undertaken at orchestras across the country will be regularly featured, providing the reader an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others. Additionally, each chapter will conclude with a series of discussion questions to ponder, teasing out some of the chapter's key concepts.

Ultimately, what works for one orchestra may be the exact *opposite* of what another orchestra needs. This makes perfect sense, especially if orchestras

# NEW THINKING: THE PATRON MODEL<sup>PTM</sup>

## PATRON DEVELOPMENT

### ■ Acquisition, Branding, & Retention Gateways:

- ▶ Acquisition & retention of buyers and donors
- ▶ Sales to causal or occasional buyers; broad-based giving
- ▶ Institutional public relations, corporate communications, branding, graphic design & production, and market research
- ▶ Patron acquisition gateways: telemarketing, telefunding, group sales, box office
- ▶ Rentals, Retail, and Front of House

## PATRON ENGAGEMENT

### ■ Engagement and Loyalty Programs:

- Preferential experiences, service, and access defined by “personalized, one-to-many methods” for “ideal patrons”
- Subscription sales, cross-patron benefit programs
- Mid-level donor clubs and programs

## PATRON ADVANCEMENT

### ■ Philanthropy and Advancement:

- One-to-one relationships with our highest value patrons
- Traditional capital and endowment campaigns, planned giving, institutional giving; prospect research
- Board development and patron events
- Volunteer Services and fundraising events

*Evolution of an ideal patron*



A chart from the *Orchestra Management Handbook* illustrates an approach to patron acquisition, engagement, and advancement. Other graphs in the book illustrate internal decision-making processes, suggest ways to evaluate programs, and show organizational charts at orchestras with a variety of sizes and structures.

are reflecting the needs of their diverse communities—needs that will be very different from one region to another. Therefore, rather than prescribing a unified “model” or “guide” to orchestra management, this handbook introduces concepts that are largely common to orchestras, alongside a variety of potential approaches to any given challenge or opportunity.

The reason this handbook is able to focus squarely on *orchestra* management is that other scholars have done a remarkable job creating a trove of resources devoted to *arts* management. Thanks to the work of these scholars (some of which is cited in this book’s notes), those who would like additional depth or context have a number of potential books, journals, and other materials to explore. Additionally, a compilation of resources is included in Chapter 10.

In terms of scope, this book is focused on orchestras in the United States.

## **Effectively establishing, nurturing, maintaining, growing, and deepening relationships leads to what orchestra managers need most—trust.**

Though many of the concepts presented herein could apply internationally (and some international examples are given), the particular characteristics of orchestras as a reflection of the financial, social, and cultural constructs that exist in the United States receive the bulk of the book’s attention. Additionally, much of the book’s content speaks to orchestras with paid musicians and staff, though again, many concepts could also be applied to volunteer or student orchestras.

Throughout the book, the term “orchestra manager” is utilized in reference to the chief administrator of the organization. The specific titles of orchestra managers have evolved over the decades, including General Manager, Executive Director, President and CEO, and many variations thereof. For the purposes of this book, the term “orchestra manager” will be used consistently to refer to the person charged with overseeing the entire administrative operation, typically reporting to the board of directors.

Managing an orchestra is a complicated endeavor that can be overwhelming, especially given the wide variety of challenges facing the field. Ultimately, the most important job of an orchestra manager is to be an active and patient listener—gathering information from all who are willing to share and making decisions that move the orchestra toward greater relevance as essential members of their community. **S**