

Diversity and Inclusion Initiative by WSSO Board

As part of the WSSO's summer 2020 initiatives, the WSSO Board supported an interview between Jennifer and the directors of CAMA and Sankofa, A Theatre Company, two Harrisburg area arts organizations comprised of African Americans. This conversation uncovered viewpoints, history, and concerns expressed by these fellow artists of color that merit further discussion and pondering. A recording of the interview is available on our website.

Whereas the WSSO's primary mission is the performance of classical symphonic music, enriching the fabric of our region, we recognize the importance of strengthening ties in our broader community. During this time of global pandemic and national racial reckoning, we acknowledge that some of our members may welcome the opportunity for personal development and discussion in the area of identifying and reducing racism.

The WSSO Board recognizes that our organization will benefit from discussions centering on inclusion and outreach for recruitment and marketing as well as our role as an arts organization in the greater community. As the Board considers our potential for and responsibility to create safe spaces for musicians of color who might like to join the WSSO, or collaborate with our organization in the future, we would also like to make available educational enrichment activities and discussions on identifying and reducing racism for WSSO members who are interested in participating.

In order to gain more insights and suggestions on what role, if any, the WSSO should play, or what activities we could support to start a wider conversation on issues facing our community during these unprecedented times, the WSSO Board is forming a "**Diversity & Inclusion Committee**", to be comprised of WSSO members and the Music Director, to address these goals:

1. Discuss and informally assess the current state of inclusivity of the WSSO.
2. Report the results of this review to the WSSO Board.
3. Propose effective opportunities for conversations and/or activities centered on anti-racism (with the arts as a focal point). Some opportunities could be intended for WSSO members only, and some with members of other organizations.
4. Once proposals have been approved by the WSSO Board, this committee will assist in communication, implementation, & facilitation of anti-racism personal development opportunities as directed by the WSSO Board.
5. We hope to have 5-6 volunteers to form the committee by September 30, 2020.
6. We hope to hear proposals from the committee by our December 2020 board meeting.

Jennifer describes what we would like to accomplish with this image:

"We don't want to erect a dam on the river to open and close to allow people of color on and off stage, but we want to form a porous net, allowing the water (people, cultures) to continuously flow easily and organically back and forth."

Please consider volunteering to be a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative Committee. Please let us know at the Town Hall if you are interested or contact any Board member with your interest in participating in this important initiative. Thank you for being a member of WSSO! We value your input.