

**SPECIAL ISSUE: DETROIT**

## *Making Detroit Sound Great*

### *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Its Post-Strike Transformations*

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**ABSTRACT:** After its 2010-11 contentious strike, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO) reinvented itself as “the most accessible orchestra on the planet.” This post-strike vision and its subsequent strategies reflected corporate entrepreneurship’s two phenomena: corporate venturing and strategic renewal. The DSO’s entrepreneurial turn enabled the orchestra to be more flexible strategically and structurally, broadened its role to become both nonprofit cultural organization and social-service institution, and helped the DSO contribute to revitalizing Detroit. Still, as most activities took place in Downtown/Midtown and Metro Detroit neighborhoods, the DSO was still far from being a true advocate for citizens of its very own city.

Monday, October 4, 2010 was supposed to be a day off for the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO). About sixty players, however, chose to go to work that morning. They put on their formal black concert attire and headed toward Orchestra Hall. Yet, instead of entering the stage doors at the back, unpacking their instruments, and beginning their warm-up routine as they would normally do, the musicians positioned themselves in front of the hall, as if they were a group of audience members waiting for the front doors to open. Instead of sitting on stage, they strode in circles along the sidewalk. Instead of symphonies, a horn quartet played marches and anthem-like music, while musicians murmured in the background. Instead of musical scores and parts, the only texts presented that morning appeared on the picket signs carried by the marching musicians reading, for example, “The DSO Musicians MAKE DETROIT ‘SOUND’ GREAT!” and “Bringing Detroit’s Music to The World.” The ninety-minute show marked the downbeat of what would become a six-month strike (Associated Press

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2010; WSWS 2010; WXYZ\_TV Detroit 2010).

The strike, spanning a total of twenty-six weeks, was one of the most tumultuous periods in the history of the DSO. It was the longest work stoppage of the institution's ninety-six years of operation. In the wake of the bitter walkout, the DSO became the first major American orchestra to shorten its contract to fewer than fifty-two weeks (Johnson 2010). Ten musicians left the orchestra, including concertmaster Emmanuelle Boisvert who had served the orchestra for over two decades (Stryker 2012). Its financial status was wobbly, with debt and deficits rapidly piling up while an endowment drastically declined (Johnson 2008; Stryker 2011a).

**Table 1.** DSO's Revenues and Expenses by Concert Season

	2011– 2012	2012– 2013	2013– 2014	2014– 2015	2015– 2016	2016– 2017	2017– 2018
Ticket revenue <sup>a</sup>	\$5.61	\$6.29	\$7.20	\$6.86	\$6.79	\$7.28	\$7.08
Contributed revenue <sup>a</sup>	\$14.75	\$17.93	\$33.64	\$22.34	\$23.27	\$26.75	\$19.27
Total revenue <sup>a</sup>	\$25.06	\$28.68	\$47.38	\$35.04	\$35.30	\$46.11	\$33.45
Total expenses <sup>a</sup>	\$32.95	\$31.56	\$32.84	\$32.93	\$33.68	\$36.34	\$34.64
Net surplus/deficit <sup>a</sup>	-\$7.89	-\$2.88	\$14.54	\$2.11	\$1.62	\$9.77	-\$1.19
Net surplus/deficit from operations <sup>b</sup>	-\$2.81	\$0.02	\$0.06	\$0.03	\$0.42	\$0.10	\$0.04

Note. Dollars in millions

<sup>a</sup>Sources: DSO 2012, 2013b, 2014b, 2015b, 2016b, 2017a, and 2018b.

<sup>b</sup>Sources: DSO 2013a, 2014a, 2015a, 2016a, 2018a.

Two years after the strike was resolved, however, the picture was completely different. The orchestra closed its 2012–13 season with a small financial surplus (Cooper 2013). It then continued to balance its operating budget in the following six seasons (see Table 1). Its subscription base grew for five consecutive years, both in terms of revenue and the number of households (DSO 2016a, 31–32). A popular new initiative, *Live from Orchestra Hall*, which streamed classical concerts on the DSO website, accumulated over one million views during its first five years of service (DSO 2016a, 22). These favorable outcomes not only defied a national trend that saw increasing deficits and dwindling audiences throughout the symphonic world (Flanagan 2012; League 2016, 7–8), but also resisted Detroit's economic decline that persisted for decades (Smith and Kirkpatrick 2015). How did the DSO manage to stand firm on this shaky ground? How did the orchestra thrive when its counterparts struggled for survival and its hometown was on the verge of bankruptcy?

The DSO's ability to reinvent itself as “the most accessible orchestra on the planet”—a slogan that emerged in the wake of the strike—was the key to this accomplishment. This brand-

new vision transformed the DSO's fundamental approach to operation. It altered the orchestra's products and services, built different target customer segments, and adjusted the post-strike musician contract to accommodate new accessibility initiatives. Through this vision, the DSO offered more than the traditional symphonic music programs via different media outlets and performing venues to reach people of more diverse communities throughout Metro Detroit and beyond with reduced or even free admission. As a result, the DSO became a more inclusive and culturally relevant institution that helped contribute to revitalizing the city of Detroit and its surrounding area.

## Corporate Entrepreneurship

By reshaping the organization's key ideas and creating new services, the post-strike vision and its subsequent strategies could be perceived as the DSO's entrepreneurial efforts to transform itself. Entrepreneurship at a firm-level like this is called corporate entrepreneurship, although other terms are used to describe a similar condition such as corporate venturing, intrapreneurship, or strategic renewal (Cuervo, Ribeiro, and Roig 2007). The scope of corporate entrepreneurship's definition varies depending on scholars and their research. Hornsby et. al. (1993, 30), for example, broadly define it as "the develop of new business endeavors within the corporate framework," while Block and MacMillan (1993, 14) take a much narrower approach when constructing conditions for corporate venture:

A project is a Corporate Venture when it (a) involves an activity new to the organization, (b) is initiated or conducted internally, (c) involves significantly higher risk of failure or large losses than the organization's base business, (d) is characterized by greater uncertainty than the base business, (e) will be managed separately at some time during its life, (f) is undertaken for the purpose of increasing sales, profit, productivity or quality.

While the creation of any new business in a firm would count as a corporate entrepreneurial effort for the former, it would not be considered so by the latter unless that new business is risk-taking, profit-driven, and temporarily managed by an autonomous unit.

A widely accepted definition of corporate entrepreneurship by Guth and Ginsberg, however, encompasses two phenomena: corporate venturing and strategic renewal (Guth and Ginsberg 1990, 5; Sharma and Chrisman 2007, 90). The first, corporate venturing, refers to "the birth of new business within existing organization," which "may or may not lead to the formation of new organizational units" (Guth and Ginsberg 1990, 5; Sharma and Chrisman 2007, 93) The second, strategic renewal, means "the transformation of organizations through renewal of the key ideas on which they are built," which "result[s] in significant changes to an organization's business or corporate level strategy or structure" (Guth and Ginsberg 1990, 5; Sharma and Chrisman 2007, 93). In other words, creating new businesses (with or without a new organizational unit) constitutes only one part of corporate entrepreneurship; renewing the organization's strategy and structure also signifies entrepreneurial efforts in a firm-level. In this sense, innovation is not a necessary condition for corporate entrepreneurship. In fact, Guth and

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Ginsberg view the newness within the scope of the organization itself. Entrepreneurial behavior is in view as long as “changes in the pattern of resource deployment—new combinations of resources in Schumpeter’s terms—transform the firm into something significantly different from what it was before—something ‘new’” (Guth and Ginsberg 1990, 6). An organization engages in corporate entrepreneurship when it transforms itself from the old to the new.

The DSO’s accessibility vision and its subsequent approaches reflect the two phenomena of corporate venturing and strategic renewal. The vision itself has renewed the DSO’s strategy and structure to be not only a nonprofit cultural institution that is preoccupied with the traditional role as a custodian of a musical tradition but also a community-service organization that engages with audiences of a more diverse socioeconomic status and musical preferences. Putting vision into action, the DSO incorporated various approaches of accessibility in many parts of its organization (Sphinx Organization 2016). Making the tickets more affordable, the orchestra reduced the average price to as low as that of the 1999 season, with half of the seats being \$25 or less. It also came up with a tiered ticket pricing strategy to accommodate a broad range of customer demographics, including discounted tickets for young professionals (\$10 per ticket with \$40 annual membership fee), rush tickets for Detroit residents (\$15 per ticket), and a very low-cost Soundcard student membership (free tickets to most concerts with \$25 annual membership fee). Its musical programming encompassed a variety of musical genres and activities in addition to the typical classical, jazz, and pop series offered by American orchestras of this period. Programming selections offered by different parts of DSO organization today include hip-hop, techno, funk, soul, world music, film scores, contemporary classical music, salsa dances, and yoga with live music. Each stood alone on programs tailored to entertain the audience of that particular genre or activity—a successful strategy to counter the “dumbing down” criticism that often stigmatized concerts featuring classical and “non-classical” musical genres on the same program (Pollard 2013; Broad 2019).

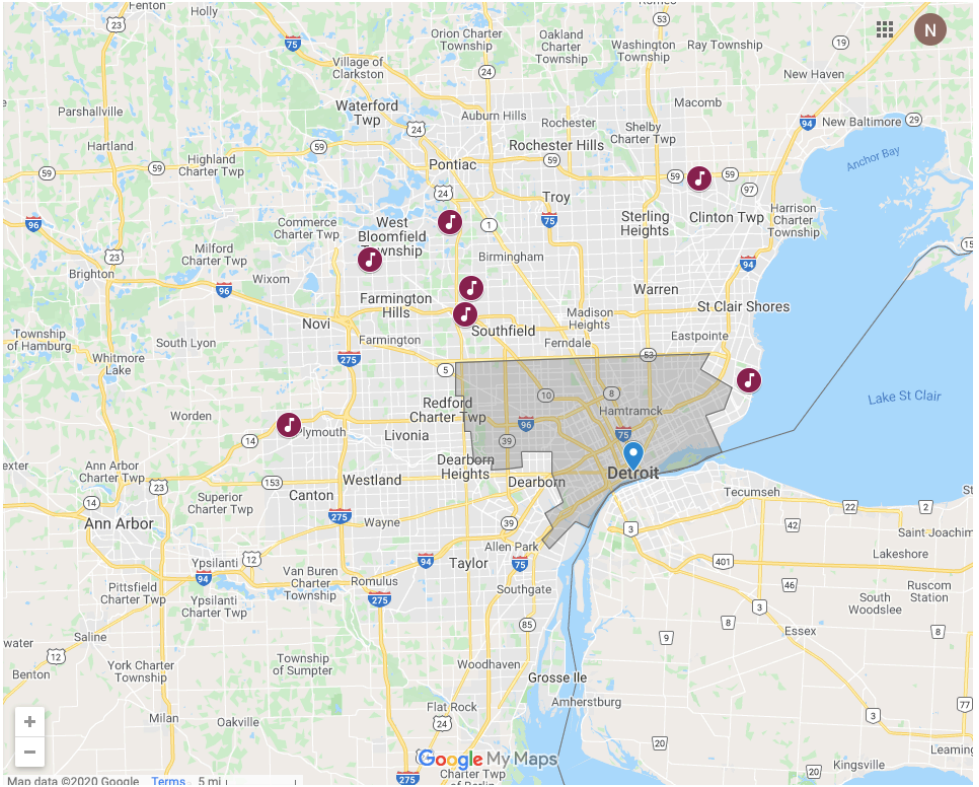
Arguably, the DSO’s strategic change was most apparent in its accessibility approaches that involved initiatives to engage with the audience beyond the walls of its Orchestra Hall in Midtown Detroit. Three initiatives were particularly influential: community engagement programs, a neighborhood concert series, and a livestreaming service. Although the DSO, as well as some other orchestras, had participated in those three activities to some degree prior to the advent of the new vision, the pre-strike forms of those initiatives were—in the words of former DSO executive vice president Paul Hogle—“random and occasional” (personal interview, March 26, 2018). It was not until the post-strike strategic change that community engagement, neighborhood concerts, and livestreaming became an integral part of the organization, taking place systematically throughout the entire concert season. Through the three initiatives, the DSO created a new concert series, established a new work rule with the musicians, and formed two new administrative units. These post-strike initiatives thus transformed the DSO from the old to the new and put the orchestra in the position of corporate entrepreneur.

## Neighborhood Concert Series

The Neighborhood Residency Initiative (now the William Davidson Neighborhood Concert Series) brings the orchestra to local churches, synagogues, and performing arts centers of seven neighborhoods around the City of Detroit. These neighborhoods include Beverly Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Clinton Township, Grosse Pointe, Plymouth, Southfield, and West Bloomfield—each receives four performances per a concert season. Three of the locations stage a standard full-orchestra repertory not unlike that of the main classical series. The other smaller venues host a more modest version of the DSO and often feature chamber orchestral works by Baroque and Classical composers such as Antonio Vivaldi, Franz Joseph Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart that are rarely heard in Orchestra Hall. Despite the repertorial differences, all neighborhood performances retain the same concert format of a typical classical concert: the lights dim, signaling the concertmaster and then the conductor to take the stage. The intermission divides the performance into two halves, each lasts about forty-five minutes. The first often begins with an overture or a short introductory piece, followed by a solo concerto. The second is commonly reserved for a rather monumental work, usually a multi-movement symphony. Throughout the entire course of the performance, the audience is to remain silent, only to applaud after the end of each piece.

Rigid and conventional, the neighborhood concert series is nonetheless a powerful renewal strategy for the DSO. The series introduces a new model for the DSO's concert season. All neighborhood performances are planned specifically in conjunction with in-house classical concerts as part of one season-long series. Prior to the strike, the orchestra offered approximately eighty classical concerts at Orchestra Hall. Now the DSO performs fifty classical programs at its main house and nearly thirty concerts in the communities. In other words, the neighborhood concerts do not constitute a separate, one-week series of local performances as they did before the strike but appear in alternation with the classical series at Orchestra Hall throughout the months of January through July. With this model, the DSO claims to be the first orchestra to hold performances at community venues over the course of a long-term series (Miller 2012).

The neighborhood initiative can be perceived as a credit to an entrepreneurial effort of the DSO musicians. It demonstrates how the musicians created new opportunities for themselves under their own new organization when they could not continue their usual employment during the work stoppage. The ad-hoc concert plan came about when the musicians could no longer enter the music hall once they decided to go on strike. Because of the space restriction, the players had to find different venues to organize their own concerts in order to make a case for their action and to raise support from the community. In the words of DSO cellist Haden McKay, who was also a member of the orchestra's bargaining committee and a spokesman for the musicians during the work stoppage, the self-organized concerts occurred "by force of necessity" to "raise a few dollars for ourselves and keep together and present ourselves to the public and carry our message" (personal interview, March 12, 2018). The self-produced concerts under the banner of "The Musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra" first appeared at the Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield Hills, a neighborhood twenty-five miles



**Figure 1.** Locations of the DSO’s Neighborhood Concert Series. Note: the highlighted area designates the city of Detroit.

northwest of Detroit (PR Newswire 2010; Stryker 2010b). Twelve performances ensued in the following six months, with two to four concerts in each month. The locales of the performing venues spanned across the greater Metro Detroit region, from St. Patrick Catholic Church located just around the corner from the musicians’ then-off-limits musical home to Our Lady Star of the Sea Church in Grosse Pointe to Stoney Creek High School in Rochester Hills, and St. Patrick Parish in White Lake.

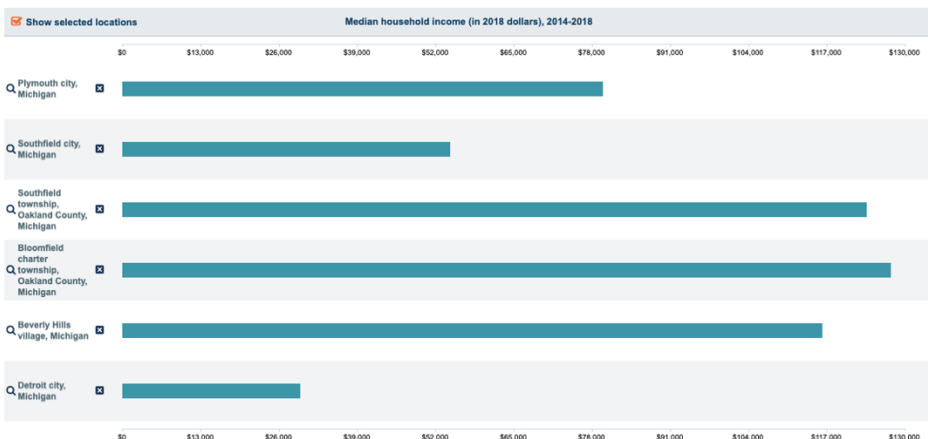
Given the success of the musicians’ ad-hoc performances, management adopted their idea of the neighborhood concerts when the strike had ended (Stryker 2011e). Thanks to generous support from the William Davidson Foundation (DSO, n.d.-b), the DSO launched the initiative in the 2012–13 season targeting former patrons who had once been the orchestra’s prime subscribers but were no longer able—or willing to—commute to Midtown Detroit. The data from the inaugural season revealed that 86% of the neighborhood concert series’ subscribers had never subscribed to the DSO series in more than ten years, compared to 14% of the patrons who simultaneously signed up for the DSO classical series (Moran 2012). Over time, however, the strategy shifted. Nicki Inman, Senior Director of Patron Development and Engagement, explained that “[the audience] is starting to become people who’ve only ever gone to those

neighborhoods because we draw new audiences in all the time” (personal interview, February 16, 2018). The neighborhood concert model allowed the DSO to reconnect with its previous patrons while attracting new ones. These concerts thus helped broaden the DSO’s influence on Detroit’s neighborhoods.

But the neighborhood series had a negligible impact on the city. All of those seven neighborhoods were located outside of the city in Detroit suburbs (see Figure 1). Except for Southfield, those suburbs were much wealthier than Detroit (see Figures 2 and 3). The median household income between 2014–18 of most of these neighborhoods were at least three times more than that of Detroit. Bloomfield residents had the highest median household income, which was four times more than that of Detroiters. On the other hand, Detroit’s poverty rate was at least nine times higher than most of the suburbs’, and twenty-four times higher than that of Beverly Hills. Even in the case of Southfield, the location for the DSO’s neighborhood concerts (Congregation Shaarey Zedek) was far outside of Southfield city and closer to the very well-to-do Southfield township. The Neighborhood Concert Series made the DSO more accessible to more people, but its focus on patrons in well-off neighborhoods left the destitute Detroit rather unattended. Its contribution to the revitalization of the Motor City was arguably scant.

## Community Engagement Programs

Community engagement, later dubbed the “Social Progress Initiative,” brings chamber groups of DSO musicians—mostly a duet—to public and private spaces around the city of Detroit and its suburbs to perform an hour of light classical music free of cost in informal or semi-formal settings. It allows the DSO to appear in places where an orchestral performance is impracticable, as the reduced scale of chamber ensembles allows the musicians to appear in small spaces that cannot accommodate an entire orchestra. The more intimate settings also help the DSO engage with its listeners in a more personal level, encouraging interactive presentations and



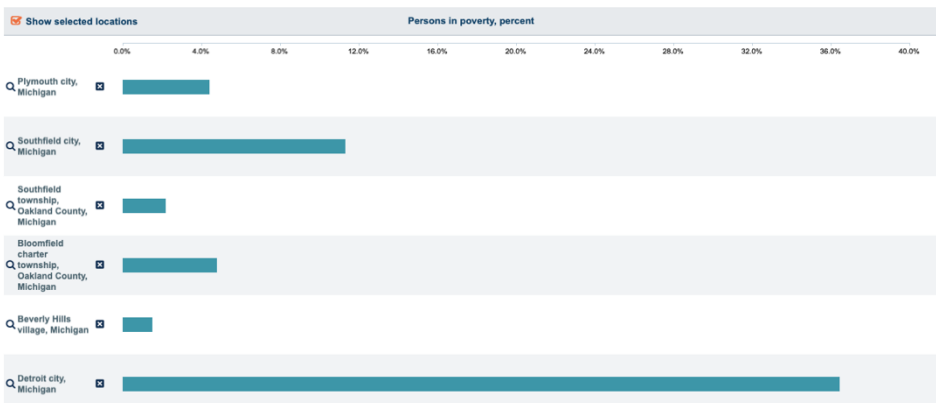
**Figure 2.** Median household income of Detroit and Detroit suburbs. *United States Census Bureau, 2019.*

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communication between performers and listeners beyond musical sounds and applause.

Although the list of programs and venues fluctuates every now and then depending on partnerships and funding, five categories direct the settings, activities, and repertoires of DSO outreach work: lobby performances, chamber recitals, focused groups, interactive presentations, and music therapy sessions. Lobby performances take place at the main entrances of major Detroit hospitals, including all sixteen hospitals within the Beaumont Health system, Children’s Hospital of Michigan, and John D. Dingell Veterans Affairs Medical Center (DSO, n.d.-a). These performances often involve two musicians who play duets of familiar classical music tunes such as Bach’s *Minuets*, Brahms’s *Hungarian Dance No. 5*, and Pachelbel’s *Canon in D*. Rush Hour Chamber Recitals occur in parks, bars, or breweries during happy hours. Despite the friendly atmosphere, the recital programs are in general more serious than those of the lobby performances, featuring original chamber music or substantial arrangements to showcase the performers.

While the first two outreach programs are open to any listeners who happen to be at the venue at showtime, the other three categories are reserved for exclusive, small groups of audience members. Partnering with the American House Senior Living Communities and the Greater Michigan chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association, the DSO offers informal recitals for focused groups of audience, namely the residents, members, and caretakers of those senior or medical centers. There, a small group of musicians, usually a duet, perform music not unlike that of the lobby performances interspersed with lively conversations with the audience to provide brief background information of the instruments, composers, and repertoire. Interactive presentations take place in a similar fashion but at social service organizations such as the Coalition of Temporary Shelter (COTS) in Midtown Detroit and often involve activities with children such as a musical chairs game and an instrument petting zoo. Finally, DSO musicians work with music therapists in music therapy sessions at the Children Hospital of Michigan and Kadima Mental Health Services. Following the lead of the therapists, the musicians play nursery rhymes and classical tunes, often accompanied by patients and staff on



**Figure 3.** Percentage of persons in poverty in Detroit and Detroit suburbs. *United States Census Bureau, 2019.*



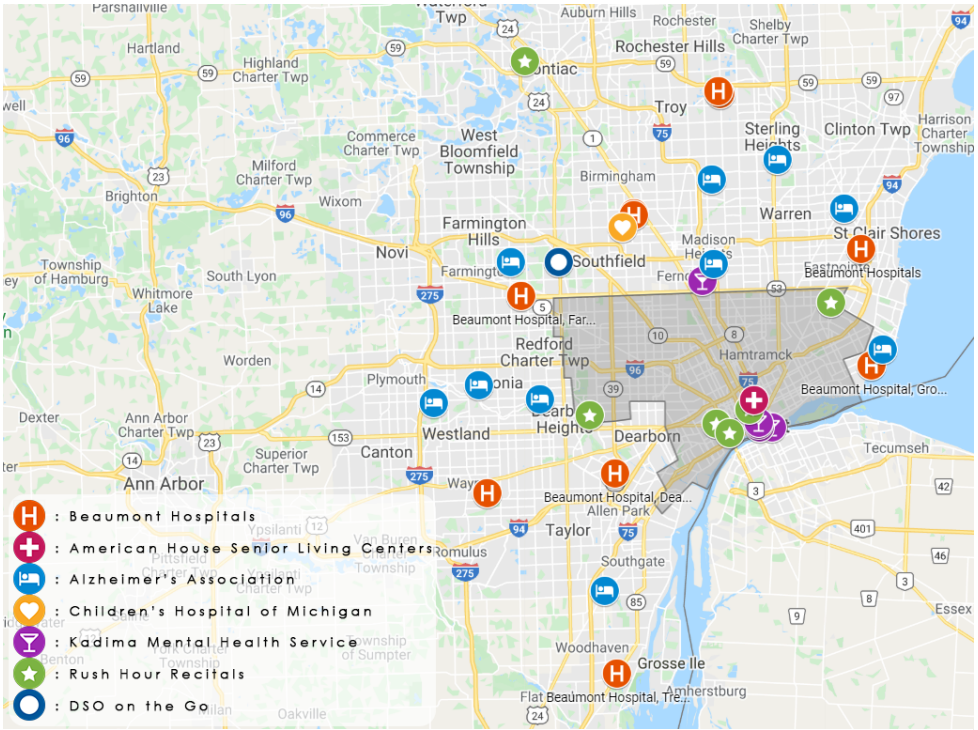
shakers, rhythm sticks, or toy marimbas throughout the session.

These community engagement activities are managed by the Community and Learning department, a new DSO administrative unit that emerged at the wake of the strike. This department designs, develops, and implements strategies and activities related to educational programs and community engagement activities. While an education department had existed in the DSO before the strike, no administrative unit designated specifically to community engagement appeared until after the work stoppage. Post-strike DSO features two staff members—a manager and a coordinator—who are responsible solely in community engagement activities and work under a senior director who supervises both the community and the education subdivisions.

Community Engagement also brought about new work rules for DSO musicians. Prior to the strike, the musicians' duties included only traditional orchestral work—rehearsing and performing substantial repertoires on stage. The new work rules expanded their responsibilities to encompass playing lighter music and interacting with the general public at various venues outside of the concert hall. Beyond excellent playing skills, the orchestral players should be able to teach, entertain, and speak in public. Although not every community engagement work required the DSO musicians to acquire those extra abilities, the work rule changes transformed their job descriptions.

In spite of contentious negotiations between the musicians and management during the strike brought up by the work rule changes (Stryker 2010a), the new responsibilities helped broaden financial opportunities for the musicians individually, as well as the DSO as a whole. Community engagement programs allowed the institution to receive extra funding from individuals and organizations who reserved their donations only for social-cause issues. Beginning on the heels of the strike, donors, foundations, and corporations specifically designated \$2-million-dollar to the DSO's community engagement initiatives (Stryker 2011d). When this funding was exhausted, the DSO collaborated with local partners for sponsorship. For instance, the American House paid for all of the musicians' services at their retirement homes; the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Foundation financed performances at the Veteran Affairs Medical Center; and the Ford Motor Company Fund sponsored *DSO on the Go* programs that included performances at COTS and other Detroit-based social service organizations that the Fund also supported such as Vista Maria, Alternatives for Girls, and Ford Resource and Engagement Center (C. Valenti, personal interview, April 16, 2018).

For the musicians, community work payment helped offset the deep pay cuts established by the agreement that ended the strike—that deal not only shortened the contract to fewer than fifty-two weeks but also decreased the musicians' base pay almost 23% (Stryker 2011c). Yet, not every musician in the orchestra obtained this additional wage or was expected to commit themselves to the outreach work. Participating in these initiatives was optional. Only twenty-two musicians per season could sign up for this program as what the DSO called opt-ins, who had the first priority to accept or reject all outreach offers. These opt-ins received a certain amount of compensation throughout the season in installments; in return, they had to fulfill a certain number of outreach hours per concert year. Unfilled offers went to ad-hocs. As the



**Figure 4.** Locations of DSO’s community engagement activities. Note: The highlighted area designates the city of Detroit.

number of community engagement services increased over the years, the rest of the DSO musicians could also secure an offer when it was not taken in the opt-in or ad-hoc levels. Only on occasion, particularly around the end of the season when opt-ins and ad-hocs had already met their requirements and the concert schedules were loaded, some outreach opportunities remained available. The musicians on the DSO’s substitute list would then assume the outreach representative positions and fulfill the tasks. The voluntary nature of the opt-in system had proven favorable among musicians. “If you’re somebody that doesn’t like doing these things, you don’t have to,” said Cellist Úna O’Riordan, “There are so many people who do, so we don’t have trouble getting people to go out and do these concerts. I’m an opt-in and I sign on for whatever things they send me an offer . . . if it works with my schedule. [The system] works really well” (personal interview, March 12, 2018). Community engagement benefited every party involved: local partnerships used the music and outreach activities to enrich the lives of the people affiliated with their sponsored institutions or organizations, the musicians had opportunities to serve the community through their musical talents and received additional income for their services, the DSO formed personal relationships with its patrons and secured financial resources for the institution.

The city of Detroit, however, did not seem to benefit much from the DSO’s community engagement activities. Although the DSO presented community work in the Detroit area, the

majority of the activities were still elsewhere. All Beaumont hospitals, the Alzheimer's Association, Kadima Mental Health, and American House Senior Living communities that the DSO serves were located in the rich Detroit suburbs (see Figure 4). The Children's Hospital and almost all of the rush-hour recital venues were situated within Detroit's boundaries, but clustered in the Midtown and Downtown neighborhoods that covered only 5% of the city's 140 square miles (Reese, 2017). The DSO seemed to affect Detroiters the most only when its musicians visited Ford-sponsored, Detroit-based social service organizations. Still, except for several interactive performances at COTS, other organizations received only one or two visits per concert season. The DSO's impact on Detroit residents through community work was much bigger compared to the neighborhood concerts. Yet, only a small number of Detroiters—and only occasionally—benefited from this new venture of the DSO. Community engagement might have helped revitalize the city, but presumably in a very small way.

## Live from Orchestra Hall

*Live from Orchestra Hall* webcast series is arguably the most innovative among the DSO's accessibility strategies. This digital strategy made it possible for the DSO to offer a more convenient, alternative mode of access to its live performances. The webcast series livestreamed virtually every classical concert program on the DSO website and Facebook page to audiences the world over with no charge. Anyone from any part of the world with internet access could experience the DSO performances for free. *Live from Orchestra Hall* enabled the organization to be accessible across the seven continents of the globe and allowed far-flung audiences to concurrently engage in a live musical event albeit their disparate locations.

*Live from Orchestra Hall* reinvents the DSO's live concert experience. It offers a closer look at the orchestra, conductor, and soloists beyond the panoramic view of the stage, both literally and figuratively. Instead of a single, distant perspective from an audience seat, the webcast alternates different camera shots and angles. A high angle displays a view of the whole orchestra from the best seat in the house. A close-up reveals each instrumental section, bringing out discreet melodies and harmonies underneath the massive orchestral sound. An extreme, close-up zoom on the performers' expressions, inviting the viewers to feel the tension, eye contact, and body language of the musicians up on the stage. "[The webcast] is definitely a different experience," claims Marc Geelhoed, the Director of Digital Initiatives, "we talk a lot in the production about telling the story of the music. And the most effective way to do that is timing the shots—which instrument is on screen in a given time. Is that the melody? Is that the countermelody? . . . Can you get them all in one shot? I think a lot of that creates the intimacy, that you're able to see the music unfold" (personal interview, February 19, 2018). While some may find the visual presentation distracting, others rely on it to enhance their aural sensation, particularly with up-close shots that allow both the eyes and the ears to attentively grasp the musical experience.

The webcast audience also gains insider access to the performance during the intermission when the audience at Orchestra Hall simply witnesses an empty stage. While the musicians and

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the in-house patrons take a break, viewers on the DSO website can explore behind-the-scene dialogues through interviews with a soloist, a guest composer, or a musicologist. These interviews—sometimes live, other times pre-recorded—provide musical insight beyond information inserted in the program notes. In one webcast from the 2018–19 season, conductor Leonard Slatkin interviewed two DSO musicians who were the soloists of that evening’s program (DSO 2017b). They discussed the performers’ musical backgrounds, challenging aspects of the pieces, their interpretations of the music, and different approaches the two players took in serving as a soloist as opposed to an orchestra member or a section leader. An interview like this may help viewers engage with the performers and music on a more personal level. The webcast refocuses the spotlight on the accessibility vision, as the online audience can appreciate the entire show—and more—without having to get off of their couch or step out of their door.

All these livestreaming features, however, are not new to the orchestral world. TV broadcasts of classical concerts have long offered such similar experiences as close-ups and interviews. The BBC Proms has been televised since 1947 (BBC, n.d.). In the United States, conductor Leonard Bernstein made his first television appearance in 1954 on the culture-oriented program *Omnibus* and continued to do so with the Young People’s Concerts series until the early 1970s (Leonard Bernstein Office, n.d.-a&b). Through these educational programs, Bernstein provided in-depth knowledge about featured composers and compositions. The *Omnibus* debut episode on Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, for instance, involved Bernstein’s meticulous analysis and demonstration of the symphony’s first movement based on several of the composer’s rejected sketches (Saudek and McCullough 2010). Insider access of the well-known symphony was available directly to the broadcast viewers. Even in the world of concert live-streaming, the DSO was not the first orchestra to pursue this form of digital technology. Berlin Philharmonic had offered concert webcasts through its *Digital Concert Hall* website since 2008. A year later, Los Angeles Philharmonic streamed its first concert from the Hollywood Bowl (Ng 2009). Closer looks at the orchestra and conversations with musicians were ordinary experience for the audience of these online media.

The DSO’s *Live from Orchestra Hall* webcast series, nonetheless, is distinctive from other digital concert services for its regular streaming schedule and free subscription. While other orchestras livestream their performances only occasionally or demand certain fees,<sup>1</sup> the DSO is able to greatly reduce a production cost of the webcasts and offers them regularly with no charge, thanks to negotiations during the strike. Most orchestra musicians in the United States are protected under a national contract by the American Federation of Musicians, which requires the orchestra to pay extra fees to the players when broadcasting and/or recording a performance (American Federation of Musicians 2018). The amount of the extra fees is variable depending on, for instance, the length of the media service, the number of musicians involved in that service, and the medium of the broadcast or the recording. In the DSO’s strike, these fees

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<sup>1</sup> The New York Philharmonic, for instance, usually streams only season opening concerts on its Facebook page. The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra offers more free webcasts, but of selected programs. On the other hand, through the Digital Concert Hall Berlin Philharmonic streams its performances regularly throughout the concert season, but charges for approximately \$15 per month.

and the dissension around the whole media issue became a major negotiating point. Initially, management wanted complete access to performances for media use without compensating the musicians. Cellist Haden McKay, who was a member of the orchestra's bargaining committee, recalled that management's initial bargain position as "we can take anything and show it anywhere and the audience will come in and they will tape you in concerts and put on social media and all is going to be great." That's a sensitive area for musicians. What we do when we perform, that's our value, that's our product" (personal interview, March 12, 2018). Ultimately, the management and the Federation settled on a new agreement involving an Electronic Media Guarantee. Instead of making an additional payment for each media service—or not paying the musicians at all for their media work—management designated a percentage of media work in the musicians' weekly pay (McKay, email message to author, October 16, 2018; Fleming 2015, 6). McKay explains that "it's all sort of incorporated into salary—a certain amount of your salary [is] considered to be for media work" (personal interview, March 12, 2018). In other words, Electronic Media Guarantee resembled a fixed, discounted media rate—a calculated pool of money allocated specifically for media-related performance—that was added to the musicians' salaries. Once the budget for livestreaming had been settled, the DSO got the cameras rolling in short order.

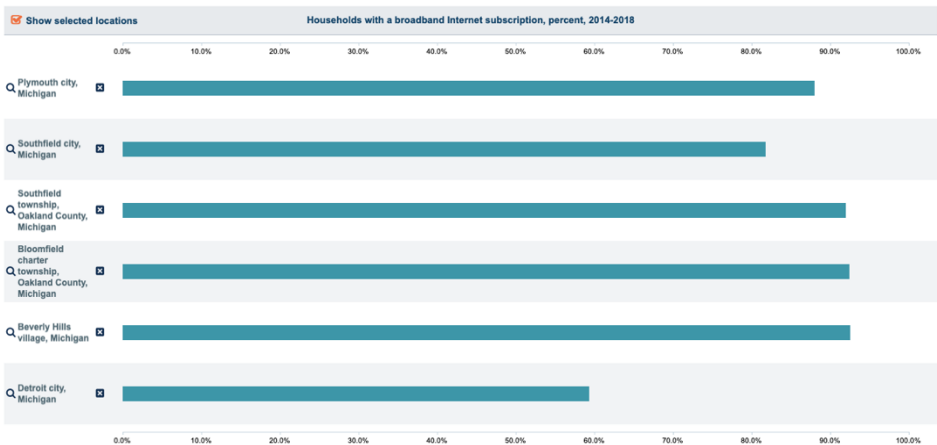
An autonomous DSO administrative unit emerged after the strike handles the digital streaming venture. This Digital Initiatives unit takes care of the entire process of online performances, from setting up cameras to storing the webcast on the DSO's website. The process actually begins a few weeks prior to the webcasting with a score reader studying the works on the program to determine camera shots, moment to moment throughout the music, and later discussing those shots with the video director. In the early days of webcasting, Leonard Slatkin took some command over shooting. Oriol Sans, the score reader at that time, reflected on his experience working with the maestro: "We would sit on a couch in his office and go through the score. [Slatkin would say,] 'Here, instead of going to the flute, go to another instrument.' He was more interested in things that would look better on camera" (personal interview, April 23, 2019). That is not the case in later webcasts, in which the conductor is no longer involved in the process. On the week of the webcast, the director, three crew members, and an audio engineer convene in the control room at an orchestra rehearsal to work out those shots and preset them on six robotic video cameras. These presets streamline the shooting by moving the cameras automatically to a predetermined spot, whether that be a performer, an instrument, or a section. During the actual livestreaming, a floor manager communicates between the camera director in the control room and the crew on the floor to ensure that the entire broadcast goes smoothly and timely. The webcast is subsequently posted on the DSO Replay, an on-demand archive available free of charge to all subscribers or donors who contribute \$50 or more to the orchestra's annual fund.

Despite its free service, the impact of *Live from Orchestra Hall* on the DSO's health has been quite positive. This digital initiative extensively broadens the DSO's base audience, making its classical performances available in both local and international levels. Within the first five years of service the webcasts accumulated over one million views (DSO 2016a, 22). About 70% of the

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webcast viewers were from the United States, with 41% of that share from Michigan (Fleming 2015, 5). Management also claimed that the digital streaming attracted more patrons to Orchestra Hall and increased the orchestra’s financial gifts. The DSO’s President and CEO Anne Parsons pointed out that the webcast series was an important factor of the institution’s turnaround: “Ticket sales, donations, all the trends are up. . . Pre-strike attendance was about 50% of capacity. Now we have more than 90% of the hall sold on a regular basis. . . I think the digital world makes us hungrier for the real world” (Fleming 2015, 3). A DSO survey supported Parsons’s presumption: 66% Michigan viewers attended the DSO in person in the 2014–15 season, with 40% attending three or more concerts (Fleming 2015, 3, 5). Similarly, former Director of Digital Initiatives Eric Woodhams perceived *DSO Replay* to inspire more donations to the orchestra. “[DSO] *Replay* is a great incentive for people to give philanthropically to the DSO,” explained Woodhams on a webpage of Brightcove, a software company that the DSO hired to produce an online video platform (Brightcove, n.d.). Brightcove asserted that within only a few months after the DSO launched the on-demand service, the DSO’s donor base grew by hundreds of new households, most of whom were first-time donors (Brightcove, n.d.). Direct correlation between the DSO’s digital services and its improved financial standing was yet ambiguous, since other causes such as growing economic, marketing strategies, or audience development might have also contributed to the orchestra’s uptrend. Still, the fact that the DSO recently received \$2.5 million from Knight Foundation to substantially upgrade its digital system—including new robotic cameras, new studio equipment for the control room, and new fiber-optic wiring that would allow for ultra-high-definition visual quality and livestreaming from the DSO’s rehearsal hall and second concert venue (DSO 2020)—revealed the confidence that management, as well as the funder, had in these two digital initiatives and benefits that they brought to the organization.

Although the intention of *Live from Orchestra Hall* is to share the DSO with a worldwide audience (DSO 2020), Detroit schoolers benefit from the webcasts, especially through the DSO’s



**Figure 5.** Percentage of households with a broadband internet subscription 2014–2018. *United States Census Bureau 2019.*

*Classroom Edition*. This didactic series brings live performances of the DSO's educational concerts to classrooms in Detroit public and charter schools. The series's inaugural season debuted in 300 Detroit schools, as well as 125 others nationwide, reaching about 40,000 students with one performance (Karoub 2014); the season's subsequent webcasts reached about 30,000 Detroit schoolers from K-8 in nearly seventy schools (DSO 2015c, 32). Despite the proximity to Orchestra Hall, many of these schools were not able to bring their students to DSO's educational performances in person due to transportation issues (DSO 2015c, 32). The educational webcast series solved the problem and allowed young Detroiters to experience live classical performances. Outside of *Classroom Edition*, however, DSO's webcasts probably have a very small impact on Detroiters. Streaming two hours of a high-definition video requires at least 2 Mbps internet speed and 5 GB internet data (Event Bandwidth Calculator, n.d.; Internet Data Calculator, n.d.). In other words, the DSO webcast audience needs either a broadband internet subscription or a very expensive wireless plan for a cell phone to stream a DSO's performance. With most households having very limited income (see Figure 2) and less than 60% of them having a broadband internet subscription (see Figure 5), Detroit residents arguably can take only little advantage of the DSO's digital services.

## Conclusion

The DSO's entrepreneurial turn to be "the most accessible orchestra on the planet" helped transform the organization to be more flexible strategically and structurally. It broadened the DSO's role to be both a nonprofit cultural organization, as well as a social-service institution. On the one hand, the post-strike DSO still offered serious art and sustained the symphonic tradition to serve its core audiences of classical music. The classical series remained relatively the same in both its programs and procedures. Patrons at Orchestra Hall experienced little to no change, except less expensive ticket and subscription sales, when attending DSO concerts after the strike.

On the other hand, the strategic shifts and new ventures pushed the DSO to be more social-minded. They urged the orchestra to expand its concert programs and services to serve more diverse groups of people beyond the walls of the concert hall. Neighborhood concerts brought the DSO to community venues and offered performances to local residents who preferred not—or could not—commute to Midtown Detroit. Community engagement helped the DSO reach out to the general public in the midst of their everyday life, whether that be seeing a doctor, drinking with colleagues at happy hours, socializing with other elderly, sheltering in a temporary home, or healing from an illness. *Live from Orchestra Hall* made DSO's performances available virtually to anyone around the world, and at any time with its archived webcasts on *DSO Replay*. While the first two initiatives allowed the orchestra to engage more with local residents—from elders at senior living homes to hip, urban young professionals, from underserved populations in Metro Detroit to middle-class families in the city's suburban neighborhoods—the last made it possible for the DSO to connect with audiences on a local, national, and international level.

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The three DSO initiatives have continued well after the strike. In fact, all of them have recently been expanded and improved, suggesting their positive impact on the organization. The neighborhood concert series has added two more performances per season in Monroe, a new venue in southwest of Detroit (Wisler 2019). Community engagement services have increased in numbers and locations. Interactive visits at COTS, for instance, have grown from a few performances up to ten sessions per season (Alcorn, K., email message to author, March 6, 2020). *Live from Orchestra Hall* has registered over two million views (DSO 2020); its recent technological upgrade will soon allow the DSO to livestream events beyond the DSO's classical and educational concert series (DSO 2019b). Moreover, labor peace—rather than a work stoppage—has been a recurrent theme of the organization. Both management and musicians were able to ratify all subsequent contracts well in advance every three years after the strike (Welch 2014; Hodges 2017; Welch 2020). Their agreements to maintain and expand the initiatives seem to validate individual and organizational satisfaction, as well as favorable outcomes, brought about by the accessibility vision.

Detroit residents, however, seem to be left out for the most part of this successful picture. Most DSO activities take place in Downtown/Midtown and Metro Detroit neighborhoods, overlooking the majority of its city and population. And given how impoverished most Detroiters have long been (Kennedy 2015; MacDonald and Chambers 2018), it would be quite impossible to imagine them buying even the cheapest seat at Orchestra Hall, dining at DSO Rush Hour Recital venue in Downtown, or driving to attend a concert in the suburb. Except for some of the DSO's community works, most Detroiters are arguably strangers to the very orchestra that bears their city's name.

Yet, the DSO's accessibility shifts have turned the orchestra into a more relevant and approachable organization compared to its pre-strike version. The DSO has become a nimbler institution that is no longer preoccupied solely with the traditional role as a custodian of a musical tradition but has assumed a new position as a supporter of the community. The post-strike DSO has reached out more to its audience, physically and conceptually. The ability to adapt has also led the DSO to new kinds of partnerships, whether with civic, foundation, or business partners. The webcasts, neighborhood concerts, and community engagement programs indicate the DSO as a cultural hub that connects nonprofit corporations and for-profit businesses with residents in and around Detroit. Strategic and structural flexibility has proven successful for the DSO to secure more financial opportunities to serve more people. But the DSO is still a long way away from being a true advocate for citizens of its very own city. Hopefully, future collaborations will narrow the gap, and in that spirit the entirety of Detroit, in resonance with its motto, will rise from the ashes and sound great—again.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Two Latin phrases make up Detroit's motto: "Speramus Meliora" and "Resurget Cineribus," meaning "We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes" (Detroit Historical Society, n.d.).



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