

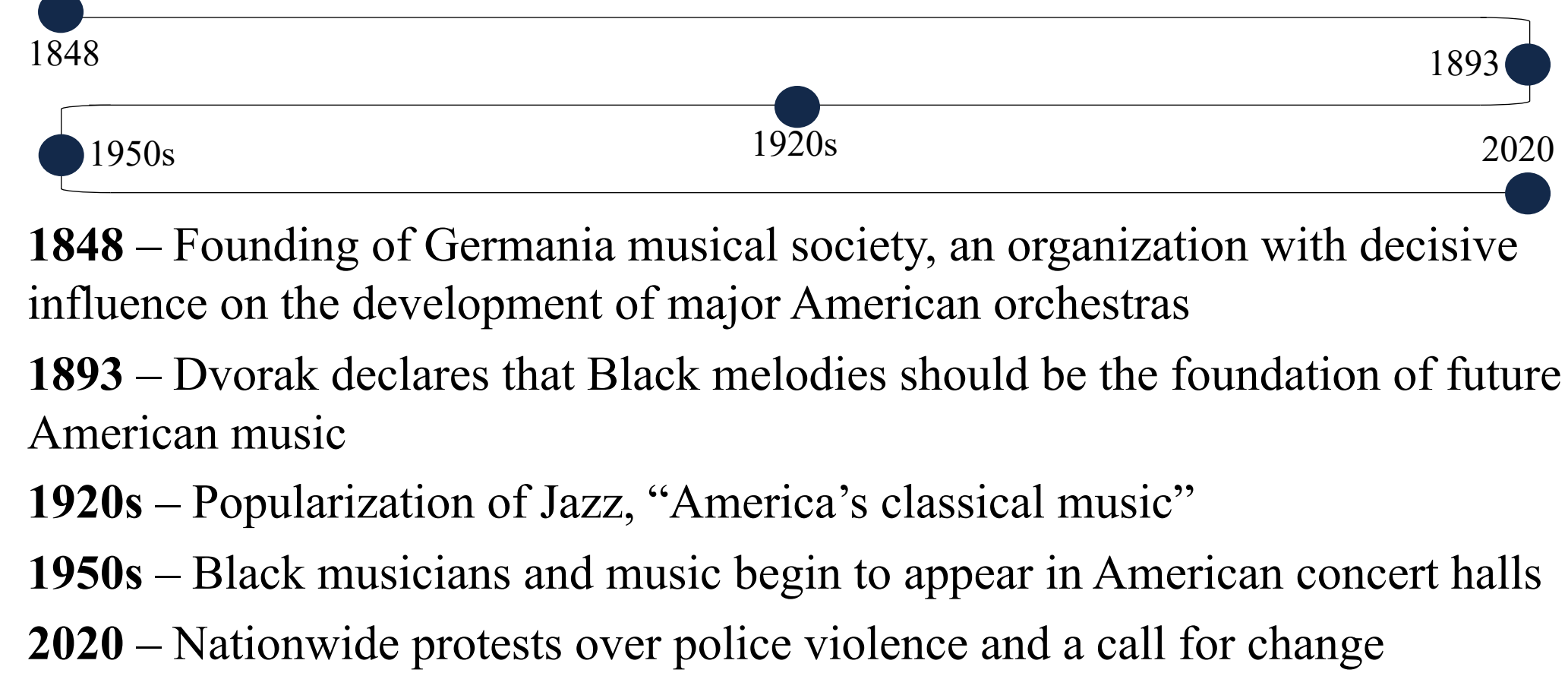
# Diversity Initiatives and their Effects on American Symphony Orchestras: Evidence from the New York Philharmonic

John Meah Jr. under the Direction of Dr. Shimul Melwani  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | B.S.B.A. 2023

## Introduction

Diversity has become increasingly interesting to organizational behavior researchers in recent decades, yet **few have explored this topic in the context of symphony orchestras**, historically homogenous organizations sharing a racially complex past. Diversity research depicts the difficulties that people of color have historically faced when attempting to join orchestras, yet little has been done to offer methods of approaching the issue. Building off previous research examining the history of race in classical music, diversity theory, and the intersection of diversity and justice, **I conducted a case study on the New York Philharmonic's diversity initiative.**

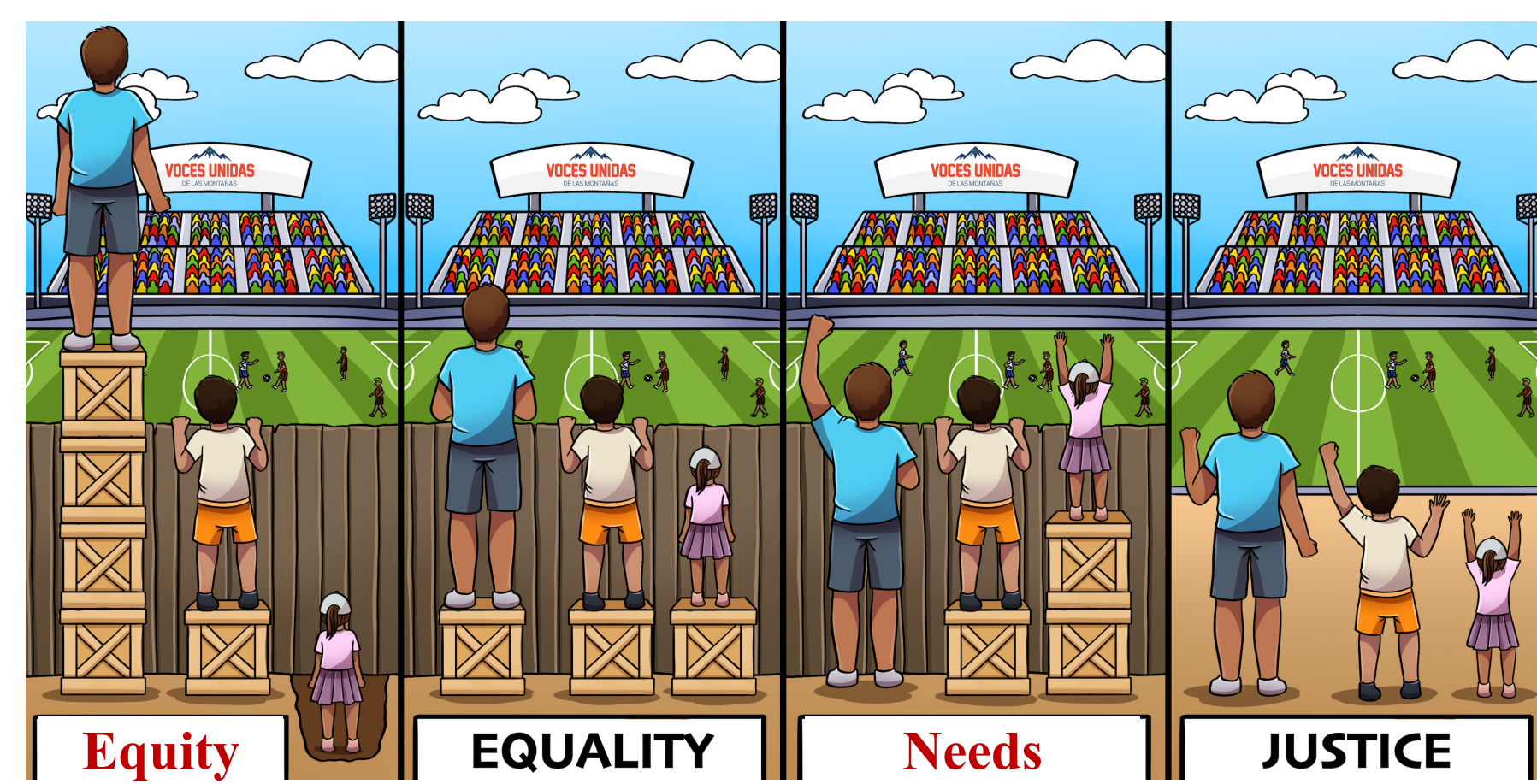
### Brief History of Diversity in Classical Music



### Aligned Diversity Theories

- Social Identity**
- Tendency to categorize others as in-group or out-group, acting favorably to those like oneself
  - People tend to fare worse in demographically dissimilar groups
  - Gatekeepers help those similar while actively working against those in out-groups
- Interest Convergence**
- Racial equality interests are only accommodated when they converge with the interests of Whites
  - In music education, discussion of non-Eurocentric works is inconvenient as they are “political”
  - Interests of Whites and Minorities aligned following the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests

### Equity's Academic Definition



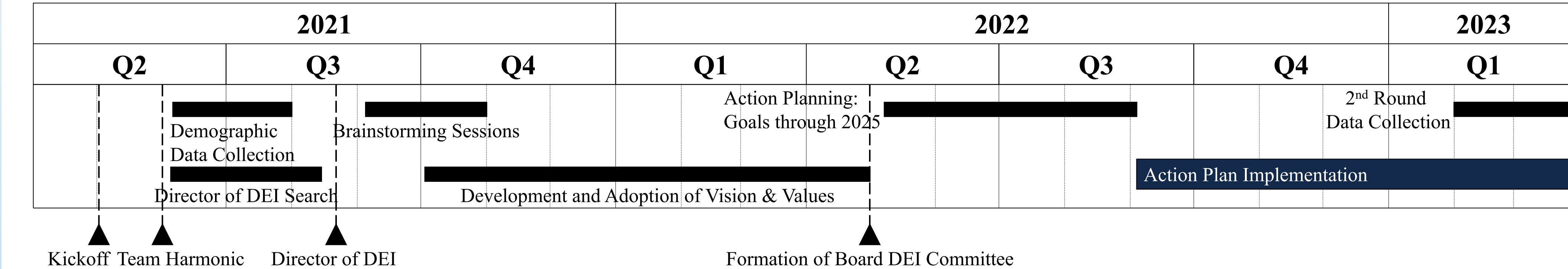
White Americans have benefitted from privileged access to resources, allowing further benefit from modern meritocratic values

### Research Objectives

- Understand how diversity initiatives translate to an orchestra context
- Determine aspects of *immediately* successful diversity initiatives
- Isolate factors that prevent success in orchestra diversity initiatives
- Provide orchestras with a diversity initiative development guide

## NYP DEI Overview

### Diversity Initiative Timeline



### Recent News

Institutional change-focused DEI initiative established in 2021 in response to public outcry  
David Geffen Hall re-opened in 2022 following \$500 million renovation

### Notable Demographic Trends

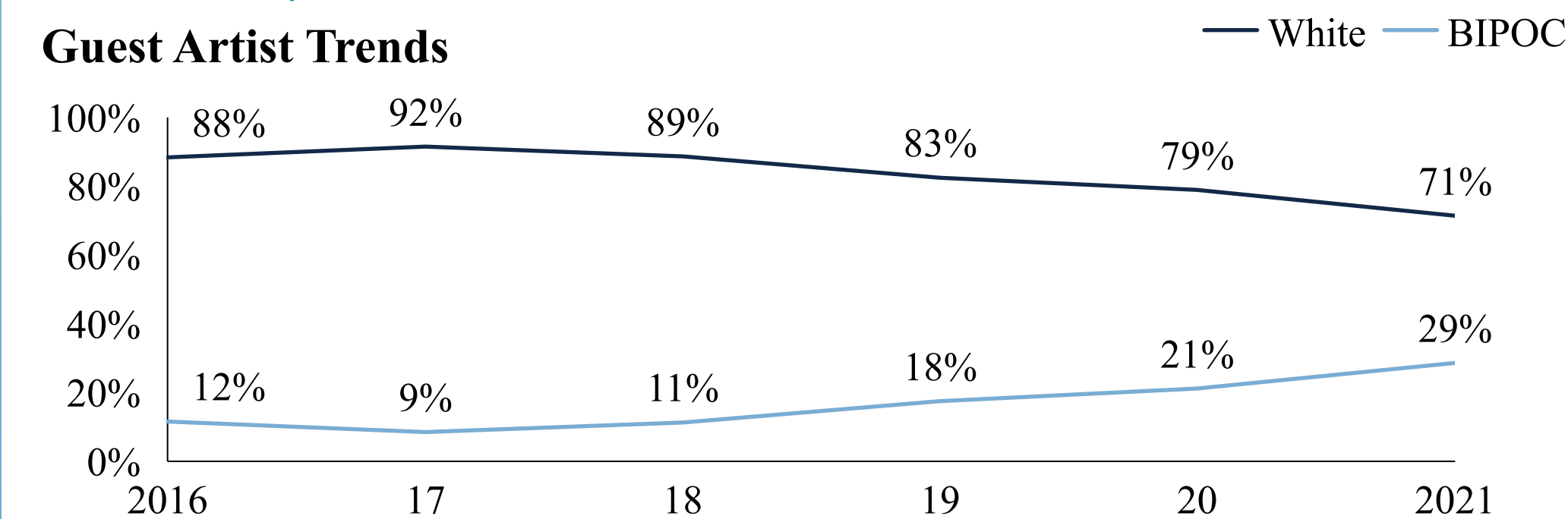
33% of musicians are Asian (vs. 1% Black and 2% Hispanic)  
Single ticket holders are more diverse than subscribers  
The organization at large is less diverse than New York City and the industry

## Methodology & Results

### Content Analysis

Justice Model	Trait	Definition & Determined Impact	Use	Example(s)	Supporting Data
Needs	Diversity training	Programming focused on addressing unconscious biases tend to absolve perpetrators of discrimination	○	▪ N/A	“The diversity initiative that we’ve taken on is a bit different than ... rudimentary training... [it’s] from the standpoint of cultural change”
	Identity-conscious practices	Targeted programs (e.g., diversity networking and mentoring groups) are associated with increased representation	●	▪ Diversity hiring (e.g., guest artists)	“Diversity has played a meaningful role in artistic programming at the New York Phil”
	Goal setting & scrutiny from governing bodies	Implementation of goal setting and enforcement actions on the workforce significantly increase selection chance for women and POC management hires	●	▪ Progress KPIs ▪ Encouraged deadlines	“So, I’ve been tracking my own personal KPIs... and institutional goals, our DEI goals” “I will say I have noticed scrutiny from leadership”
	Use of dedicated committees	The development of committees to undertake initiative actions provides the support necessary to ensure goals are met	●	▪ Team Harmonic ▪ Subcommittees	“Certainly, the establishment of Team Harmonic and the expansion of that work across stakeholder groups. So yeah, that’s an easy yes”
Equity or Equality	References to “diversity of thought”	Identities shaped by unique experiences – people have different world interactions Obscures attention to racial and gender fairness and emphasizes the advancement of all employees	●	▪ Internal reference(s)	“Yeah. I would say [I’ve noticed references]” “No. And I don’t believe in diversity of thought”
	Color-blind processes and framing	These processes remove race as a factor from issues that are fundamentally shaped by structural racism People may attribute the consequences of racism to individual choices rather than institutionalized processes	●	▪ Blind auditions	“We don’t call out auditions colorblind, but they are blind. We have improved some forms of diversity to an extent, but there are other considerations around blind auditions that still need consideration”
	Stringent meritocracy	Ignoring racial discrimination by considering workplace rewards and status as a product of a person’s competence	●	▪ Blind auditions	Welch’s <i>t</i> -tests

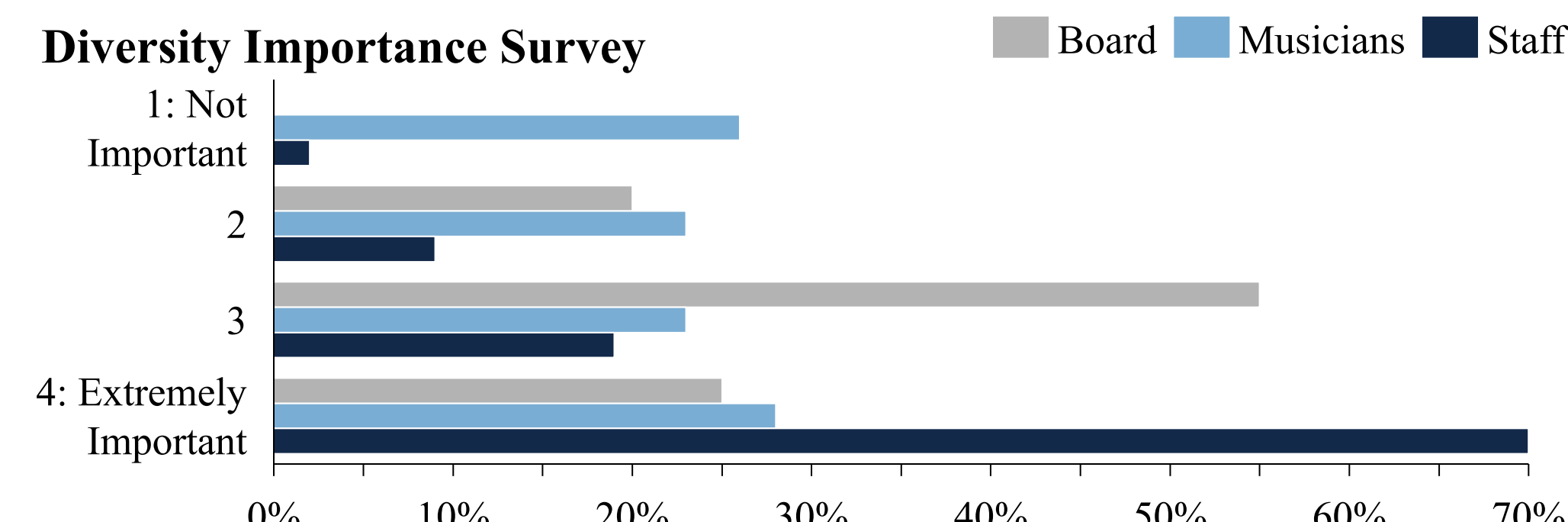
### One Sample *t*-tests



**Purpose:** Determine if a measurable impact from the DEI initiative was experienced by each stakeholder group

**Findings:** The 2021 BIPOC representation of guest artists is the only group that was statistically different from the previous five years  
▪ This represents a rising trend of increased diversity,  $t(4) = -6.34, p = .002$

### Welch's *t*-tests



**Purpose:** Determine the extent to which musicians, staff, and board members support diversity initiatives

**Findings:** Staff members were more supportive of diversity than board members,  $t(42.33) = 3.09, p < .01$ ; Board members were more supportive of diversity than musicians,  $t(64.33) = 2.43, p < .05$

## Discussion

### Tips for American Orchestras

- Develop a process focused on altering the DNA of the institution
- The process will be long and arduous, but will reshape organizational thinking
- Progress is nonlinear – focus on implementing small changes that build towards large goals
- There must be a true champion of DEI in the organization
- Organizational infrastructure must be well-developed for an organization to properly serve its people

### Practical Implications

- Filled a gap in the current diversity literature by expanding to the symphony orchestra space
- The New York Philharmonic is making progress towards better representing their community and addressing past instances of discrimination in the industry
- The organization must address internal sentiment surrounding the diversity initiative before cultural change is possible
- Other American orchestras are likely to follow the New York Philharmonic’s example and they now have a de facto guide to do so

### Future Research

- Goal:** generate the support necessary to bring about transformative cultural change in symphony orchestras
- Analyze the impact of diversity on the financial performance of American symphony orchestras
  - Determine why musicians are less supportive of diversifying orchestras
  - Determine processes that effectively generate diversity initiative buy-in from orchestra musicians

## Key Takeaways

- Orchestra administrations are slow-moving**  
Change takes longer in symphony orchestras than other organizations – expect a cultural restructuring to take years or even decades
- The industry must address past discriminatory acts**  
Given historic unfairness for people of color in the space, discrimination must be addressed and reconciled through need-based action
- Identity-conscious hiring practices have immediate impact**  
Guest artist diversity was immediately improved by programming decisions – these shifts can signal cultural change
- Stakeholders demonstrate differing levels of support**  
Unlike other industries, stakeholder groups maintain varying diversity support – institutional support must be balanced before external action

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