
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Audience Study Supports Efforts to Make Classical Music Radio More Welcoming & Inclusive

Research With People of Color Around the U.S. Reveals Strong Potential to Engage More Diverse Listeners; Free Webinar on May 10 at Noon Pacific / 3pm Eastern to Explore Findings

CHICAGO, IL (April 26, 2023) – A report issued today by the social research firm Slover Linett and a group of listener-supported radio stations reveals that Americans of all major racial and ethnic groups listen to classical music at roughly similar rates, countering assumptions in the arts field that classical music is enjoyed largely by White Americans.

The new summary report, **“Taking Another Listen: Audience Research With People of Color To Help Make Classical Music Radio More Welcoming,”** is available as a free PDF at <http://sloverlinett.com/insights/taking-another-listen-classical-music-radio-research-with-people-of-color>

The study was commissioned and funded by Classical KING, Seattle’s classical public-radio station, and was designed and conducted in collaboration with three other listener-supported stations representing large and small U.S. cities and disparate regions: KUCO in Oklahoma City, WRTI in Philadelphia, and WQXR in New York City (a division of New York Public Radio). The working group also included the League of American Orchestras, and additional perspectives were provided by an advisory group of four leading innovators working at the intersection of classical music, racial equity, and media engagement: Jade Simmons, award-winning pianist, speaker, and podcast host; Quinton Morris, violinist, educator, entrepreneur, and lecturer; Lara Downes, recording artist, producer, curator, and host; and Emilio Alvarez, cellist, composer, broadcaster, and advocate.

The research team from Slover Linett, led by Tanya Treptow, PhD and including Michelle Ernst, PhD, and Matthew Jenetopulos, MBA, began by conducting open-ended interviews with 24 people of color living in Seattle, New York City, Oklahoma City, and Philadelphia, none of whom listened to the classical radio station in their city. They then designed and conducted an online survey of 1,662 adults across the U.S., evenly split across Asian, Black or African American, Indigenous, Hispanic or Latinx, and White respondents. The resulting report offers new ways of viewing longstanding audience-diversity challenges in classical music radio (and, by extension, in other media-based and live classical music settings) and suggests five directions for change to make the field more welcoming to listeners of color – and especially to younger people of color.

A free webinar presentation and conversation about the new report will be held on Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at 12 noon Pacific / 3pm Eastern. Please register at

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_x12hbQSSSzym5NgtHaJSQg

“Classical music and the arts have a long history of exclusion born from racism,” notes Brenda Barnes, CEO of Classical KING. “This study shares some very important positive news: People of all races and ethnicities are enjoying classical music. We’re just not welcoming and serving people of color as well as we could. What needs to change is us. The research demonstrates that we can and must do more to ensure that everyone feels welcomed by our stations.”

Ed Yim, chief content officer and senior vice president of WQXR, adds: “We work in public media because it’s uniquely positioned to help diversify and broaden the audience for all kinds of great

music. 'Taking Another Listen' affirms that classical music can be an evolving and inclusive space that reflects the communities in which we work. Creatively and intentionally, we must rise to the challenge ahead with open minds."

Other members of the project team agree about the field's responsibility: "This research clearly demonstrates that classical music's appeal extends well into more diverse communities," says Bill Johnson, general manager of WRTI-FM. "The task of engaging those communities in public media is now squarely on our shoulders."

And Brad Ferguson, the recently retired general manager of KUCO at the University of Central Oklahoma, observes: "Classical music, whether on the concert stage or the radio, has never captured the majority of music lovers in this country. But this study shows that it is alive and well within the broader culture, and that it can speak to audiences of all backgrounds and identities."

The project team hopes the new findings will support equity-oriented leaders and activists around the field, both in public media and the music and arts community. Karen Yair, vice president of research and resources at the League of American Orchestras, who provided context to the researchers from the live-performance side of classical music during the design and interpretation of the study, agrees: "This landmark report is a crucial read for everyone involved in programming and promoting classical music. It not only demonstrates the broad appeal of classical music across all racial and ethnic groups, but also gives clear strategies for meeting new, more diverse audiences where they are."

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About Classical KING:

Classical KING FM 98.1 is a listener-supported public media organization serving Seattle and the Puget Sound Region. Its mission is to make classical music accessible for everyone in the community and to advocate for the arts in our region. In addition to creating broadcast and streaming programming that offers everyone in the region an opportunity to make classical music and the arts a part of daily life, Classical KING partners with arts and culture organizations of all size and scope in the region. We offer broadcast performances of local concerts as well as an opportunity for local musicians to perform on our signature Friday evening program Northwest Focus LIVE. The Northwest Focus Concert Calendar offers listeners the opportunity to learn more about concerts and events to encourage them to deepen their involvement with classical music and the arts by attending and supporting the region's performing organizations. Classical KING operated as a commercial classical station until 2011 when it became a classical public radio station. More at king.org.

About Slover Linett:

Slover Linett Audience Research Inc. is a social research practice for the arts and culture sector, broadly defined to include museums of all kinds, the performing arts, parks and public spaces, public media, libraries, science engagement, creative placekeeping, and philanthropy. Founded in Chicago in 1999, the firm uses both empirical and generative research and evaluation methods – from neighborhood ethnography and co-creative workshops to quantitative survey research and advanced statistical modeling – to illuminate audience perceptions, values, behaviors, outcomes, and new possibilities for relevance. Slover Linett's mission is to help changemakers across the arts and culture field increase equity and access, deepen engagement, and meet community needs. We place inclusion, empowerment, and social justice at the center of our work, and our staff includes social scientists from disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, and public policy. More at sloverlinett.com.

About WQXR:

WQXR is New York City's only all-classical music station, immersing listeners in the city's rich musical life on-air at 105.9FM, online at WQXR.org, and in person through live events and performances. WQXR presents new and landmark classical recordings as well as live concerts from New York City's concert halls and performance venues, and broadcasts essential destination programs including *Carnegie Hall Live*, *Metropolitan Opera Saturday Matinee Broadcasts*, *New York Philharmonic This Week*, *New York in Concert*, *This Week with Yannick*, and the *Young Artists Showcase*. WQXR also produces podcasts that reach new audiences for the artform: *The Open Ears Project*, *Helga*, and the critically acclaimed opera podcast *Aria Code*. As a public radio station, WQXR is supported through the generosity of its members, donors and sponsors, making classical music relevant, accessible and inspiring for all. More at wqxr.org/.

About WRTI:

WRTI is a listener-supported classical and jazz radio station in Philadelphia with over 20,000 active members and a mission to champion music as a vital cultural resource. Over 300,000 listeners tune to WRTI each week on the radio, and an ever-growing number of people listen online via our two 24-hour web streams, on Internet radio, or via the WRTI Mobile App. Over 80% of our operating budget comes from community support, including members and sponsors – both corporate and cultural sponsors. The remaining 20% is received through grants from additional sources, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Temple University. WRTI provides over \$300,000 of free on-air promotion to the region's arts community. More at wrti.org.

About KUCCO:

KUCCO, broadcasting at 90.1 FM from Edmond and Oklahoma City, OK, is a community-supported outreach program of the University of Central Oklahoma and the only locally programmed performing arts music station in the state. With our repeater stations, our airwaves extend across central Oklahoma to the east with KBCW 91.9 FM in McAlester and west with KCSC 95.9 FM in Woodward. The KUCCO team is dedicated to our mission to be Oklahoma's Voice for Performing Arts and ensuring great musical works are present within our communities. We welcome listener feedback and hope our programs enrich the community's passion and interest in music and other performing arts. More at kucofm.com.

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