

Episode 97

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community development through the arts, Lima Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Crust, music director and conductor, arts and economic development, music education and exposure, accessible ticket pricing, pops concerts, diverse programming, healing through music, Lima Civic Center, downtown Lima revitalization, building a livable city, nonprofit arts funding, music as universal language

SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Andrew Crust, Ethan DeLeon

A

Andrew Crust 00:00

100 inmates from the prison actually sang in a choir wrapped around the orchestra with us. So, you know, talk about impact. These kind of things are amazing. We also do something called Healing Through Music, which that program was a part of, where we go into the involuntary psych ward of the hospital and play string quartets for them and talk about emotion. And, you know, Robert Schumann was dealing with mental health at this time. He eventually had to go to the asylum, and these are the feelings he was discussing in this music, you know. So it's— There's so many ways outside of the concert hall that we can reach people.

E

Ethan DeLeon 00:38

Welcome to the Small Nation Podcast, brought to you by CoverLink Insurance, where people are more important than policies. On this show, we unpack lessons from entrepreneurs, break down development strategies, and do deep dives on small town success. Our goal is to provide value to our listeners by hosting conversations that teach, inform, and inspire.

J

Jason Duff 00:58

¡Hey, everyone!

E

Ethan DeLeon 00:59

My name is Ethan DeLeon, and I'm here in the studio with the founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Today, we are excited to be hosting music director and conductor of the Lima Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Crust, on the show. Welcome, Andrew.

J

Jason Duff 01:10

Great to be here. ¡Aplausos! ¡Aplausos! No, I've been looking forward to this, Andrew. It's great to have you in the studio. It is— music and the arts are something that's very important to me and to so many of our towns and communities and to actually have a conductor here of an orchestra, and to unpack that a little bit and talk about that, just excited to have you on the show today.

A

Andrew Crust 01:30

And we're going to be performing together in a couple days.

J

Jason Duff 01:32

Yes, yes, we'll tease that out. We're gonna do a little plug, of course, at the end of the episode for why people need to come out for that show and support all the amazing artists that are going to be there. But, um, Andrew, you have a number of hats. Uh, it's not just in Lima. You're, you know, doing guest conducting and serving other orchestras around the country. For, for our guests, can you share, like, What does a music director do and what is a conductor?

A

Andrew Crust 01:57

Well, I'm probably the first one you've had on your show. Yes. Yes. Congratulations. Absolutely. So it's a bit of a mysterious world, I think, to people, but it's like probably a lot of jobs. But yes, I officially work with two orchestras, the Lima Symphony here and the Vermont Symphony, and I'm music director in both places. And the job there is to be present in the community, to make ties to the community, different arts organizations and other groups artistically. You choose the entire season. So every single piece that goes onto the programs, every guest artist that comes onto the stage, every collaboration, that's sort of my domain, which is, you know, it's my favorite thing to do, to choose what we play. And also I audition the musicians. I'm sort of the public-facing person myself, and usually the executive director is in that role. I do a lot of media. I do a lot of education. Just this morning, I was in a school with 400 kids doing a drum circle.

J

Jason Duff 02:48

How fun.

A

Andrew Crust 02:50

Really, you're just an ambassador for the arts and in a way, a liaison between the orchestra musicians and the staff and also the community. But it's really a bit of everything. And that's kind of what I wanted. I wanted a job that had many different things that were required of me.

J

Jason Duff 03:05

Tell me about why is music significant to you? Like, maybe tell us about your journey and how music became important in your life.

A

Andrew Crust 03:12

Well, I hope it's important for everybody, but, you know, it's all about exposure. And I had parents that had really good musical taste. They weren't classical musicians, but they they exposed me to it in a way, but also every other kind of music imaginable from, you know, Nina Simone and the great jazz greats to the Beatles were always in the house, the classic rock, pop music from the '90s, you know, when I was growing up. And so I got this early exposure. And I think especially through the Beatles who were playing on my way up here, I kind of learned how to be a musician. The music is so good just by listening to it over and over and over again. On my mom's turntable speakers. Were you playing by ear?

J

Jason Duff 03:49

Like when you first started out a little bit?

A

Andrew Crust 03:50

I started playing by ear. My stepfather is a rock musician as well, so there was a little bit of that in my family. But yeah, I was always in the jazz band. I was a trumpet player and a pianist, which often requires you to play by ear, which not a lot of people can do. But that I think is important because it allows you— it gives you a door that's open. You don't have to learn how to read the music right away. You can just experiment. So I had a terrible piano in our house that was literally— the cat food was on top of the piano and it would fall in between the keys. Oh man. So it didn't really work properly. So humble beginnings, I'll say that. Yeah, I love that. And then growing up through those experiences, did you always have the dream of becoming a music director or what was the dream for you back then? Not really, because I didn't know that was a thing. I was very, very immersed in music, but I didn't like, you know, Leonard Bernstein, who was the legendary conductor of the 20th century, he had these Young People's Concerts that he would broadcast out on TV to millions of people. And so everybody knew what that role was. But that didn't really happen in my life. I just wanted to be a musician. Then when I went to music school in college and finally started playing in orchestras, I realized this is the job for me. And it's kind of because, you know, you have two options in orchestra world. You can spend every day in a practice room, really just shredding, you know, working on all of the— your individual part. Yeah. Or you can think more big picture and, and plan. Like I said, all the things I do, plan the long term, study the entire piece of music, not just the first violin part, for example. So I kind of wanted that more intellectual side rather than the, the physical side. It's really athletic, you know, to sit in a practice room for 5, 6 hours a day.

J

Jason Duff 05:29

Tell us about where you grew up.

A

Andrew Crust 05:31

Grew up in Kansas City. Great art scene there, all kinds of great jazz history and really everything you can want, fantastic symphony orchestra. And then studied kind of all over the place. I went to my master's at McGill in Montreal, which is how I started my Canadian journey. And then I went back for another conducting degree, a doctorate in conducting at University of Colorado Boulder, beautiful city. And then

—

J**Jason Duff** 05:56

Another great town.

A**Andrew Crust** 05:57

Worked in Portland, Maine, my very first conducting job, and then Memphis, Tennessee, and then Vancouver. And now I'm a dual citizen also in Canada. Yeah, very cool. Wow, that's quite the journey. But I'm kind of curious, career in music can be quite the undertaking for a lot of people. I'm curious, for your journey, what gave you the confidence to say, hey, you know what, I can do this? And I'm hoping that will be relevant to anyone that— we want to make this broad for your whole audience. Great mentors, and you have to seek them out. And if anybody out there is young and they're trying to go to college, I would say find somebody who's going to help you in a really deep way and find a school that has you know, personal attention. I— a lot of people in music and a lot of other fields, I guess, like medicine and law, they go to the— they want to go to the top name school, and that's great on paper, but what kind of personal attention did you get? And so actually, my undergrad was at Wichita State University. It's a city of 300K, at least when I was there, and the faculty was so attentive, and they got to know me, and I, um, that was really beneficial, I think. But because it wasn't an international city in the music scene, I had to go to Europe all the time. I went to workshops. I spent every single dime I had to go to Europe to study with great teachers and to be in the scene. So whatever industry you're in, I think you have to go to those places. It's often New York, LA. You have to just find whatever money you can to get yourself there, because it's just about people, really, the people you know. Yeah. I love that. And then eventually you connected with the Lima Symphony Orchestra and you said Vermont, right? So can you take us through the rest of your journey on how you connected with those two places? So I started, you know, the first jobs you usually get in America as a conductor or in Canada are assistant conductor or associate conductor jobs with very large orchestras. Our orchestra here is wonderful, but it has this much smaller season compared to, you know, even the Columbus Symphony or certainly the Cleveland Orchestra, which is one of the top in the world. For example, Vancouver Symphony, where I was associate conductor for 3 years, they do 150 concerts a year. So your job is to assist. You, you go to all the rehearsals, you work with all of the guest artists and guest conductors, you make all those connections, and you just learn a massive amount of repertoire. It's sort of like an apprenticeship program in any field. You, you're not paid very well, you have no social life, but you're gaining all of those incredible skills. And so once I did that, then that opened the door, um, with all of the experience I had to start applying for music director positions, the big artistic jobs. And Lima is the kind of orchestra that has an open call. So there were finalists that were named and actually brought out to perform in front of the public. Sometimes it's just headhunting. Cleveland would do it that way, perhaps. So it's a very public situation. And I did a lot of interviews and worked with kids, and they put you through the gauntlet. Really?

J**Jason Duff** 08:48

Wow. One of the really big bright spots of Lima has been the Lima Symphony Orchestra. Yeah. There's no doubt to the listeners of how important arts have been a part of my journey and, you know, seeing how artists are out and about creating businesses, giving back to community, utilizing their creative brain to like do all this amazing stuff. And particularly in Lima, the Lima Civic Center, about, I think it just celebrated maybe its 40th anniversary in the last few years. It has been a treasure to have a facility like that in downtown Lima. And when that was planted, you have the Krause Performing Arts Hall that, you know, seats, I think it's over 1,000 people. And it's a beautiful place to feature live performances. And the programming that's there over the last years, I mean, as when I was first learning about music and having a chance to be on that stage, it got me exposed to working with other people in the arts. And there's a lot of different jobs. There's stuff that happens in the front of the house, of course, with the ticket sales and the promotions and the marketing. But then on the back of the house, you've got people that are organizing as the stage manager. They're working on sets. They're working on all of these things that make the production the production. But a piece of that, and I think that's what's really neat about Lima, is the symphony orchestra. And it is a very, it's a significant investment on behalf of the community to curate the budgets, the paying for the venue, the artist, and I wanna credit Lima in particular, the leaders who had the vision. I think the orchestra's been around, do you know how many years, Andrew? I know it's been decades.

A**Andrew Crust** 10:37

Nearly 80.

J**Jason Duff** 10:38

Yeah, so I mean, that investment, someone had the courage to fund that and get that started, but now today, the neat thing, and I think we're gonna talk about that a little bit, is seeing how the ripple impacts of having the Lima Civic Center, having this revitalization and innovation that's happening in downtown Lima. And we had Tracy Sanchez on that unpacked for us her journey of bringing the Central District online. And then I would just happen to be— and I attended the Ohio Northern University holiday spectacular this past weekend. In Lima, and I know we've mentioned Kewpie Hamburgers and Harry and Myrna Schutt and their entire family, how they started making the arts accessible and affordable to everyday people. Do you know how much the tickets were to attend this incredible New York-style holiday show in Lima, Ohio? Do you know what I paid?

A**Andrew Crust** 11:37

Was it \$5 or \$10?

J**Jason Duff** 11:38

\$5.

A**Andrew Crust** 11:39

And you make us feel bad with our \$35.

J**Jason Duff** 11:42

But my point— my point is with that is that someone, people came together, stepped up for the arts, and that benefit, the younger version of me had a chance to not only attend to those shows, but it's just like when you heard what Andrew mentioned, like there were people earlier in our life that got us exposed to that. How important as you work with young artists today and you think back on your journey, how important is that?

A**Andrew Crust** 12:07

Oh, I mean, it's number one, I think. And I mean, to talk about your point of how valuable a symphony orchestra is, it's think about all of the other added economy benefits and and the restaurants and, you know, and what do you— what is it that you want to do to make a city livable? I think the arts is one of those big pillars. And as new companies come in, as new housing is developed, they want to attract people from all different locations to come. And if— well, what have you got for me to do? Is it— is it only sports? I mean, some people, that's all they need, but some people, they need a lot more. So— but yeah, going back to that, it's just all about the connections and the exposure. And we have a lot of great programs. Right here with the Lima Symphony at every single level, from an intimate level, working with kids, you know, in a chamber music setting where I'm always at the library Saturdays when I'm in town doing mornings with the maestro. And it's right up there close with the kids, and they get to even conduct a little bit and play instruments. We did a really cool program where we actually had kids during COVID in various schools compose songs and write lyrics. Oh, wow. Yeah. And their teachers worked with them to kind of flesh out the harmonies. And then the symphony actually recorded the backing track for those because we couldn't meet them in person. And the classes actually sang over the orchestra recordings. It was incredible. Oh, wow. Yeah, that's super cool. And then something I know just from my personal life, both my older sisters participated in the Lima Area Youth Orchestra. And my mom is a music educator. And that's what she was trained up on. So music was always big in our household. She taught piano. But it was important to her that we get classically trained in a couple of instruments. And so I ended up taking trumpet lessons later on in high school. But my older sisters, they actually participated in, in the Lima Area Youth Orchestra. And I remember going to those as, you know, a kid is like super special experience to go downtown Lima. You know, it's a big ordeal. People bring flowers, you know, and then promoting the arts in such a way. And then my oldest sister actually went on to study music production in college then after that. And my, my sister after that, she studied more of a, in the science fields, you know, she became a physician assistant, but like She's much more of a well-rounded person because I think of that, that music and creative, you know, upbringing, which is really cool. It just brings that vibrancy to a downtown and makes people want to live there, which, as we are unpacking here in recent episodes especially, is one of the very first and most important things about economic development.

J**Jason Duff** 14:29

100%. And just to double down from this past weekend, after we finished watching the show at the Lima Civic Center, we went over to Spring and Main and which is the development that John Haffey has led, that I was so impressed. We had amazing Italian food. We went up and threw some duckpin bowling and then ended up enjoying a nice cocktail. And I could have never imagined that walking around downtown Lima would be anything like that experience. And so I just want to remind, like, it takes— it's a whole tapestry of players and people that are reshaping towns. The other thing, Andrew, as you being the leader, when you bring different musicians together, there's different personalities, there's different types. How do you approach bringing that group together and making beautiful music?

A**Andrew Crust** 15:24

Well, you choose the right people, first of all. But if you don't know much about them, which sometimes I don't, obviously, That's why you got to know a huge network of people. You get recommendations, you get, you know, insider information. But even then, I still sometimes don't know somebody. And I think as a leader, you, first of all, have you done your work? Do you know the score and the music inside and out? And that applies obviously to any field. Have you prepared the rehearsal, or in many cases, it might be a meeting? And if you just seem to have prepared very well, then I think your next task is just to be genuine. And flexible, because especially in the arts, but in many fields, you know, some people don't like public speaking. They might be really nervous and you might think, oh, they didn't prepare or, oh, they hate me because they seem very aloof. It's never you, it's always them. So to be really flexible somehow and allow for them to be supported and comfortable. I'm very privileged to work in a world where people are insanely good all the time, especially, you know, when you think about these the soloists that we bring in who are international touring musicians. They've been in every situation possible. And generally, I show up and they are more prepared than anyone. So it's a very privileged situation to be in. And the orchestra as well, they've been rehearsing and practicing on their own. And so it's a cool job because you show up, everybody's been working quite hard, and now we just get to fine-tune and really make the art. I'm kind of curious to learn a little bit more about that world. You mentioned soloists and the bass orchestra that is there.

J**Jason Duff** 16:58

So how do you—

A**Andrew Crust** 16:59

you said you're kind of the liaison between all these people. What is the process like of connecting your soloists and knowing that they are wanting for these opportunities and you're able to connect them with that? How do you find the timing and the logistics of that, I guess? I mean, a lot of it, it's really impressive. And I encourage people to— I'm not trying to pat myself on the back, but I encourage people to come to rehearsals because it's pretty crazy what happens without words. And a lot of what we do is nonverbal. And we can cue each other. With visual cues and movement, but also it's just we train our ears so that we can be very, very flexible. And so I'm kind of a— it's kind of a triangulation when you have a, say, a piano soloist or a vocal soloist, you know, you have to catch the breaths, you have to follow their tempos and know when you're in charge and when they're in charge and when someone in the orchestra actually is in charge. And so I think it's a great microcosm for society, the way that I do, you know, leadership. Brute force. It can't be. And you have to be able to cede power from time to time because otherwise it doesn't work. It's a collaboration. So I see myself more as a sort of a conduit of all of these different energies. Um, and you have to just recognize all the great work that everyone else has done. So it's, it's very exciting. It's— you never know what's going to happen. And, uh, but generally it comes off really well. And that's, that's what makes live art exciting, right? You never know.

J**Jason Duff** 18:19

Yeah. They talk about music being a universal language. And I know you've done a lot of traveling, not only here in the United States, but abroad. In a world that's very divisive and communities and people that get siloed, when you think of the larger vision of the work that's happening in Lima and with the symphony, what do you see from your lenses and perspective with that?

A**Andrew Crust** 18:41

Music, and it doesn't use words. Sometimes, obviously, it does use words, but it can go beyond words, I think. And when you add words, it's even more powerful. But you're right that it can bridge these divides. And we've— sometimes all it takes is playing a great concert, and you notice all the different people that have showed up from different backgrounds. But we also are very intentional sometimes in recognizing the history of this area. To give you an example, in previous administrations, previous boards, somebody brought up performing this amazing Black composer William Grant Still, who's dead now, but incredible 20th century composer who's now had a sort of a renaissance. And somebody on the board said it would be ignorant to play that here because people don't want it. They're not ready for it. They're too backwards in their thinking. And I heard that. And so what did I do? Well, February came around and we did a whole Black History Month concert. And not only that, we had a poetry event afterwards. It wasn't really a slam. It was a reading with about 5 different poets, local poets, on the stage. And we invited the audience to stay and about 80% of them did. And, you know, so you can be very intentional also about sharing other stories because I think my industry has been a little bit Western, you know, European and white male in the past. The work that's being done today is absolutely not that way. It's incredibly diverse in terms of composers and performers. But that's the, like, basis of our history. And so I think we have to work very hard to move it in a different direction, because it's got a lot to teach us, the arts. It can teach us empathy. But we also have to remember that one art form is not more valuable than others. And well, okay, are you going to a blues concert? Are you going to a mariachi concert? Well, then why would you expect Mexican people to come to your concert? Right. So it's a sharing experience.

J**Jason Duff** 20:30

I love that. The other thing that you mentioned is how you're connecting with different types of audiences. And I love when you mentioned growing up that you had parents that exposed you to lots of different music types. And you mentioned the '90s pop. And what I think is really neat in the whole orchestra movement is the development of pops. Can you explain for our listeners what that is and how in Lima maybe you've done some pops programming?

A**Andrew Crust** 20:57

Yeah, we want to meet people where they are and also keep a high artistic quality. And so, of course, you think of an orchestra, you think of Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, all these people who are great, as you know, the pinnacle of the art form, of course. But there's so much more to be done that's really great music. And so orchestras do pops now, we call it pops. And it used to be more light classics, think, I don't know, the can-can from, you know, Carmen Suite or something that was really recognizable, Nutcracker. Now it's really, really embraced more genres, rock and roll, like we're doing in every year, New Year's Eve, we do a pops concert, and this year is Motown. Um, and disco. We've done, uh, you know, we've done Fleetwood Mac, we've done the Beatles. We've also done, you know, even film music could be considered pops, and we've done whole concerts dedicated to John Williams. We did a whole concert based on the Hollywood sound of the golden era. I think a lot of people, their entry point to classical music is films, and it's great music, and it's really hard for the orchestra. John Williams is one of the hardest composers ever. And, um, so, you know, you find the right things to do that are interesting for the orchestra, but bring people from a different audience in.

J**Jason Duff** 22:06

And we have to be creative in these smaller markets too of how we entice audience and sell tickets, because part of what raises money for the arts is when we fill, put butts in seats. And so I do like that I've seen with Lima, and I know a lot of the other theaters that I've been exposed to or work with in a lot of small towns, like getting creative for how you can market and introduce people to to that music. And then once they do get introduced, part of the behind the scenes on the business side of things is we want to get an email address. We want them to like or subscribe to our digital marketing and digital media, and we want them to invite friends. Because when all those things start to happen, more and more people fall in love with, with that theater or fall in love with that company or fall in love with that orchestra. So, you know, the marrying of the creative mind and the business mind We kind of need both of those brain types. In your organization in Lima, we want to give a shout out to Elizabeth. Can you explain a little bit about kind of the team that works with you at the orchestra to make all the magic happen, both on the artistic side and the business side?

A**Andrew Crust** 23:15

So it's a small staff that does a whole lot. And Elizabeth is at the top of that list because she's our executive director, Elizabeth Brown Ellis. From Lima, went and studied, you know, all over, was in New York and Paris, and decided, no, this is where I want to be, and her family's here, and she felt she could make a big impact. She started in marketing in the symphony, and then it was obvious choice for executive director, and she oversees all of the staff. We have artistic staff, logistical staff, we have a director of development who is really critical to raising funds, because of course, in America anyway, the government is almost nothing for our funding, maybe less than 5%, and ticket sales, Maybe a third. I'm not exactly sure on that number. So it's really about private and corporate donations. And so we always—orchestras always have a dedicated development person. Then we've got logistical positions to help with the orchestra personnel. And there's actually a librarian at every orchestra. People don't always know that, to prepare the parts. And every instrument has a different part, right? So they have to have all those in order. And there are a number of other staff people also, of course, people on the technical side. So it's a big umbrella, and Elizabeth and I are sort of the ones that coordinate all of those people together. But it's having her in that role as a person who's local and knows the families and knows the history, it's really, really important. All right, at this time we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from our sponsors.

J**Jason Duff** 24:38

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A**Andrew Crust** 24:42

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J**Jason Duff** 24:57

Big city dining in a small town.

A**Andrew Crust** 24:59

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J**Jason Duff** 25:14

The other thing that we spent a lot of time, Ethan and I, discussing is how technology has innovated a number of industries. And one thing that I think with music and particularly your work, how many more iPads I see on music stands today. And I kind of think back to college like, oh my gosh, this would be a game changer with all the recording technologies, all the AI. Like, how are you thinking about innovation, innovating as an artist and as a conductor? And then how are you seeing that evolve amongst musicians?

A

Andrew Crust 25:52

You know, you might not like the answer, but—

J

Jason Duff 25:53

I was going to say, it's going to be a controversial topic here.

A

Andrew Crust 25:55

There's not much that we even need to do. I think there's a lot that we can do on an organizational level in terms of marketing and outreach and organization and things like that. But, you know, what am I going to do with a Beethoven score with technology that I— and obviously, for me, it's mostly the marketing. I've made a lot of interesting at least I think they're interesting videos, along with one of our board members at Moto Media, Chad Stearns, you know, 5 minutes long, introducing people with a lot of fun visuals to what is the story of Brahms' Violin Concerto. Did you know that it was like a bitter feud between, you know, his friend who wasn't his friend anymore? So trying to reach people in that way and not assuming that people know the story of who these people are, even a Beethoven. They might know that he was deaf and that's it. So I, you know, in our world, we don't need to do too much, I think. And I think we're going to be one of the last ones to be replaced by the AI machines, which is great. Performing artists, I think.

J

Jason Duff 26:49

I hope so.

A

Andrew Crust 26:50

I hope that's composers though. That's another story. That's already happening. Do you do any composing yourself? I do a bit. Yeah. And I also, I, you know, mess around on synthesizers and electronic stuff, but it's a real craft, right? So I just, if I had the time, I'm on the side, I'm mostly a visual artist. That's my hobby. Okay. In what way? Like painting or? Painting, linocut, printing, ink drawing. I do a lot of digital as well on my iPad through an app called Procreate. Yeah. Okay. So that's sort of my side hobby because conducting is not actually creative. You don't make anything. You're interpreting someone else's work. Yeah. And so I think that the artist in me really needs to make something, you know. Yeah, that's awesome. Uh, do you ever pick up an instrument these days? Yeah, I think, um, trumpet was my original. It's, it's, you know, you kind of— it's loud, you need to have a proper place for that. I'm in an apartment building right now, and you lose that ability so quickly. All the muscles are in one place, right on your lips, and if you don't play for 2 weeks, you're done. So I play piano a lot more. I've got one of those. It's a lot easier to do, I think. Yeah, that's a lot of fun. So we talked a lot about, you know, the orchestra and what goes into that and engaging your community. But you said part of the job is not just leading the orchestra, doing the business side, but it's actually engaging with the community. I mean, you mentioned the library stuff, but what are some of those other ways that you are interacting with the communities that you serve? On every level, I think from government, from meeting with, you know, all the local governors, I mean, government officials. And in the case of actually in Vermont, there's state appropriations the orchestra can manage to get. That's very rare. We don't have that here, but meeting all of those people who would connect us with other donors, I think that's really important, but also meeting with the local movers and shakers like you guys, you know, and figuring out what are some collaborations we can do. One of the coolest things, which I cannot take credit for, last summer we brought the entire orchestra to the Allen Oakwood Correctional Institute, the prison here around town, and that's like the first time that's ever happened in the whole country, I think, maybe, certainly in the state. The whole orchestra came. Performed for them a very poppy sort of patriotic thing with film music. And then 100 inmates from the prison actually sang in a choir wrapped around the orchestra with us. So, you know, talk about impact. These kind of things are amazing. We also do something called Healing Through Music, which that program was a part of, where we go into the involuntary psych ward of the hospital and play string quartets for them and talk about emotion. And, you know, Robert Schumann was dealing with mental health at this time. He eventually had to go to the asylum, and these are the feelings he was discussing in this music, you know. So it's— there's so many ways outside of the concert hall that we can reach people. Yeah, that's great. Some real and heavy stuff there.

J

Jason Duff 29:39

The holidays— we're kind of in the midst right now of the holiday season. And I think that time of year, music, and especially holiday music, is something that that people get really excited about. For you, in the conducting that you've done, what are some of the favorite things that you get to do around the holiday season?

A

Andrew Crust 30:00

Well, hug a musician around the holiday season.

J**Jason Duff** 30:04

It is a stressful time, right?

A**Andrew Crust** 30:06

It is. And every time I hear sleigh bells, I get a little Pavlovian response, I think. I have mixed feelings because you all get to enjoy all that music. We're out here working.

J**Jason Duff** 30:16

So yeah, that's actually a really good point.

A**Andrew Crust** 30:17

Yeah. Yeah. But at the same time, you know, you love the energy that you're getting back from people at this moment. It's just a wild time, that's for sure. But usually you get to work with a choir around that time, and that's a lot of fun. We have our Lima Symphony Chorus, sometimes can be 90 people strong. And you get to just have a wide variety. There's holiday music going back hundreds of years too. So everything from the Bach Christmas oratorio to Duke Ellington's version of The Nutcracker, you know, to even Mariah Carey covers. We do it all.

J**Jason Duff** 30:48

She, you know, if she knew— I was watching a, uh, like a reel the other day about how that— there was really one musician that played all parts on that originally, um, and, and then she listened to it and liked it. It was all kind of synthesized, uh, and then that's when they actually brought other professional musicians to put it all together. But that song is like— I think she's done pretty well with that.

A**Andrew Crust** 31:12

I'd say so. If she only did that, she'd be fine. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 31:16

Ouch, she's probably on Twitter now, going to put us out of business. What do you enjoy listening to?

A**Andrew Crust** 31:26

Oh my. The funny thing is, when I was in college, I listened to classical music all the time, not exclusively. But these days, and I don't think I'm alone, because we just do it all the time, it's not always on my playlist. I say that, but I listened to an entire Schubert quartet on the way over here. Yeah, OK. But I mean, I think I just have a broad variety of— I was listening to Nina Simone, I was listening The Beatles. I had Radiohead and Sufjan Stevens come on. I really like '60s music in general, all kinds of things. And international music, I was listening to an Indian sitar player on the way up here too. And it's just music is music. And I really get upset when people think that the '80s is old.

J**Jason Duff** 32:07

That is actually a really sobering thing is when you talk to the youngins, it's like, oh, I love listening to the oldies. And I'm like, oh, yeah, tell me about that. And they're like, like, you know, the stuff like NSYNC. And I'm like, what?

A**Andrew Crust** 32:20

But even when, when I was that age, I was listening to things that were 20, 40, 100, 200 years old. Like, why do you have to limit yourself? People just, just do what people tell them to do. But there's— there literally are hundreds of years of music you can explore. And I get that it can be a little overwhelming because you don't have the knowledge about, I don't know, the Romantic era in Germany or something, but it's there. There's plenty of opportunity to learn about it.

J**Jason Duff** 32:44

How has the, in the musical theater realm, you know, seeing so much with the new stuff that's coming out and, you know, we call it Disney-fying a lot of the, you know, the traditional Broadway stuff. And then seeing a show like *Wicked* that, you know, I think gonna break so many blockbuster records in the movie theaters. Like, what's your kind of take on that evolution if you see happening in musical theater right now?

A**Andrew Crust** 33:10

What do you mean by Disneyfication?

J**Jason Duff** 33:12

Everything kind of becoming— the negatives I think of it is we're seeing fewer and fewer orchestras actually live performing, where it's becoming more click track kind of stuff. Or it is probably more visual and maybe not as artistic in terms of the classical traditional way to think about musical theater.

A**Andrew Crust** 33:36

I mean, I think the visual side is happening everywhere. We unfortunately, I think, are forgetting how to listen deeply and how to concentrate for more than 5 minutes without having pyrotechnics and beautiful animation. And that's a product of all of the smartphones and the technology. But the thing I love about the arts is they force you, unless you're at a Taylor Swift concert. I was just coming from Vancouver. She had her—

J**Jason Duff** 33:58

\$2 billion, by the way. So I will tell you, the Holland is going to be bringing in a Taylor Swift, what do they call them? Not lookalike, but, um, impersonator. Yeah. Like, and they're gonna do like her, that will probably sell out.

A**Andrew Crust** 34:13

Like, it's not even Taylor Swift.

J

Jason Duff 34:14

It's not even Taylor Swift, but it's like her, you know, cover music. Um, and you gotta, you gotta give her credit. Like, that's, that's, there's a huge audience for her.

A

Andrew Crust 34:22

Yeah. Yeah. And I, and you know, you go to a Beyoncé show and, and part of me just thinks, okay, would you get 30,000 people if she was just singing on the stage?

J

Jason Duff 34:29

Right.

A

Andrew Crust 34:29

I hope, because she's a great singer, right? And, but we need the extra things now. I think that's a, that's really a problem that really bothers me. And the great thing about going to a theater production or a musical theater production where you can't have your phones out is that you're forced to just be present in the moment and for a long period of time. And that's almost nowhere like that anymore. Even airplanes have Wi-Fi now. It's true.

J

Jason Duff 34:52

Yeah.

A

Andrew Crust 34:53

Uh, shout out to Dayton, Ohio.

J

Jason Duff 34:54

Actually, I just went to a dinner theater out there to watch a musical Laska Media, right? Yeah, yeah.

A

Andrew Crust 35:00

Uh, production of Holiday Inn, which is an old film, but a lot of fun. And it's like quite the experience. I think that's honestly a concept that I can see being a bigger hit. I mean, it was packed there on a random weeknight, um, and I mean, it's a well-known show, but still, I was, I was very impressed.

J**Jason Duff** 35:18

So, and this is for the economic developers listening, if you've not kind of tapped in and figured out that the arts arts are so essential to your community development program. We've, you know, shared a few examples here in Lima and obviously what's happening in places like Vancouver and Vermont where Andrew's involved. And then particularly here in Bellefontaine, if we didn't have people— I give credit to Chris Swisher 25 years ago and the play that her 4th graders wrote to save our historic theater. Can you imagine what the town would be like if the Holland was taken down. Right. And I traveled to too many towns and communities where unfortunately there wasn't those people to step up to say, we value the theater and the arts. And I think these are many of the ideas that have been shared are ideas that you need to take back to your leaders in your community on how to, how can we be intentional about investing in this? And it really is an investment. And what I love about Andrew is that in the business world, we talk about this term of fractional CEO, fractional controller, you know, people that are professionals at a very high level but working to get a fractional amount of their time to help your organization or your business. And, and that's the kind of thing that's unique about your work is you were able to work with multiple orchestras and still provide a lot of value to each one of them.

A**Andrew Crust** 36:42

That's true. Yeah. And then even as a guest, you know, you— or you can be a sort of a consultant. And I think it works because, well, the Lima Symphony doesn't have 150 concerts a year, and you better believe I'm emailing every single day and doing all the planning for that. But the physical needs are not as much. And yeah, you bring your expertise and you share— we share ideas about programs and soloists and all of these things. And I'm very lucky that that works out.

J**Jason Duff** 37:07

For someone listening that's saying, hey, I want to find and get this program kind of up and going in my community, Is there any advice of where they find people like you? Is there certain associations or websites? Like, how do you get access to finding artists or finding conductors to maybe get something going in their community?

A**Andrew Crust** 37:27

Like, get an orchestra started?

J**Jason Duff** 37:28

Yeah.

A**Andrew Crust** 37:29

Hmm, that's an interesting question. Usually, it's interested donors. And I think the very first thing is they, you know, you go into a room, and you shake hands, and you say, OK, we've got enough money to get it started, at least for one season. There isn't really one place, I wouldn't say, to do that.

J**Jason Duff** 37:46

Could be a business opportunity for someone listening out there. So, so do people jump on LinkedIn? Do they jump on, you know, Monster, or look at job posting boards?

A**Andrew Crust** 37:56

I wonder how — It's totally different in the arts. Yeah, it's totally different. We have our own, you know, especially for the musicians in the orchestra, there are, you know, Musical Chairs is one of them. There are all these different blogs and things, but for the administrators, maybe LinkedIn, usually not. It's just very sort of insular and word of mouth, and of course you put out a call, but it's, it's, it's no website that anyone listening has ever heard of. It's very industry-specific.

J**Jason Duff** 38:19

Well, uh, we're kind of rounding out towards the end of the episode here, and, uh, just to give a plug, we mentioned around the holiday season, uh, you've got some big concerts coming up here in the next few weeks. Do you mind kind of sharing a little bit about what, what's on deck?

A**Andrew Crust** 38:32

Absolutely. I just came from Saskatoon where I, I conducted, uh, the, you know, Movies in concert are a big deal now. You take out the score and you play it live with the orchestra with the conductor on a click track.

J**Jason Duff** 38:43

Yeah, that's coming back.

A**Andrew Crust** 38:44

Yeah, I've seen a lot of those with major blockbusters. They're great. They're very expensive. They cost like \$50,000 to \$70,000 just to get the rights to do the thing. So I will say that in advance. But I just did Elf in Saskatoon. Oh, that sounds fun. Wow. It's a nice score. And then, of course, this week we have our Lima Symphony Bells, Brass, and Bows. And you're going to be performing here in town. Yes. Singing some Christmas carols.

J**Jason Duff** 39:04

Yes. Yes, looking forward to that.

A**Andrew Crust** 39:05

Have you ever sung on this show?

J**Jason Duff** 39:07

No, actually. That's really interesting. He always makes the improvisation. I make the guests very uncomfortable to ask them what karaoke version they would like. But no, you'll have to come to the show this weekend to hear that.

A

Andrew Crust 39:23

Yep, that's right. Is it Sunday? Yes, it is. Saturday for the Lima show, and then Sunday for here. Nutcracker with live dancers, and then the first half is a lot of film music from Christmas, the Christmas world, Nightmare Before Christmas, Polar Express, How the Grinch Stole Christmas. Then I'm off to Vancouver to do another Elf, and then I'm back here to do our New Year's Eve Motown and Disco show.

J

Jason Duff 39:47

Well, that sounds fun. So New Year's Eve, you can actually grab drinks and dinner and go see a show in Lima. It would be a whole evening out. So that's right. Yeah, thanks for mentioning it.

A

Andrew Crust 39:57

Yeah, and check out the Central District in Spring and Main while you're in town as well.

J

Jason Duff 40:00

But, um, great.

A

Andrew Crust 40:01

I'm going to move us along into a show segment called our Rapid Fire Q&A.

J

Jason Duff 40:06

Oh, these are the tough questions.

A

Andrew Crust 40:07

Yeah, scared. So the first one is, what is the very first instrument you learned to play? Well, I guess it would have been in like elementary school, right? Probably the recorder.

J

Jason Duff 40:16

The good old-fashioned recorder.

A

Andrew Crust 40:19

Yeah, but, but I will say, just having a piano in the house—

J

Jason Duff 40:21

was it a piano or a keyboard?

A

Andrew Crust 40:22

Did you have both? It was a proper, uh, upright piano, but like I said, it was a little bit janky.

J

Jason Duff 40:27

You learn about intonation and, and pitch and all those things then, right? That's right.

A

Andrew Crust 40:33

Yeah, yeah, very valuable in my opinion to have a real like upright piano in a home.

J

Jason Duff 40:37

Just because—

A

Andrew Crust 40:37

and you can get them for, for—

J

Jason Duff 40:38

they are Facebook Marketplace. If you go to, you can find a free piano.

A

Andrew Crust 40:43

Yeah. And I will say, let your kids bang around on it because that's how you experiment. And, and at least in moderation, it does get annoying, but do not just don't quell their desire to make sound immediately because they just, you know, that stops them from being interested.

J

Jason Duff 40:59

Yeah, no, appreciate that.

A

Andrew Crust 41:00

Second question here is, if instead of conducting you were to be exclusively a professional instrumentalist, what instrument would you choose? Oh, maybe the cello. Yeah, I don't know, the cello. It's so versatile. It plays the low, it plays the high, plays the melody, the bass, it just everything. Just honestly, if I could just play Brahms cello music all day, that would be fine. I got a cello for Christmas one year just because I wanted to learn. So still in the process though, sitting in my living room right now. Okay, cool. Um, if you had to choose one career completely unrelated to the field, what would you be doing? Maybe something in biology, honestly. Something— science. I'm very much into sci-fi and I watch science videos constantly, and I, uh, I love the natural world. And I have a weird hobby where I have, um, aquatic jar ecosystems that I've created. Wow. Just seal them and you let them develop, and they have generations and generations of of creatures being born and dying. And so I love that. I love the natural world. I wish I could do more in that.

J

Jason Duff 41:55

Yeah. Star Trek or Star Wars?

A

Andrew Crust 41:57

Star Trek.

J

Jason Duff 41:57

Good answer. I've asked that question a few times, and we are in the minority. We have a lot to talk about that. I have a— yeah, definitely agree with that. Even with all the great music in Star Wars.

A

Andrew Crust 42:07

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that is actually true. Story-wise, you got to go with— I mean, every week was different on The Next Generation. Thank you, Andrew. Different lessons to learn.

J

Jason Duff 42:15

Thank you.

A

Andrew Crust 42:16

Not to mention Voyager and Deep Space Nine.

J

Jason Duff 42:18

Anyway, we can totally geek out about that.

A

Andrew Crust 42:20

You guys can talk about that after the show. Okay. Last one I have for you here is, do you speak French? Oui, je parle français. Ah, all right.

J

Jason Duff 42:26

Yeah, I'll say I talk with Spanish. Yeah, that's very good.

A**Andrew Crust** 42:31

Good work. Very cool. Well, just a couple closing questions here, and the first one is, do you have a professional development resource that was impactful for you along your professional career that you can share with our listeners? I don't know that I would have a resource that anyone outside of music would, uh, would really understand because it maybe wouldn't apply. But there, I got into the books of Cal Newport. Maybe you guys have heard of this guy, um, especially that learning to, to, to do a bullet journal, which is something you can find on YouTube. It's sort of a way of organizing my life. And Cal Newport talks about that with— I'm trying to remember the book that really— it's called Deep Work. Yeah. And it was a way to sort of live in this modern world, and no matter what your lifestyle is, to, to carve out time. Because, you know, the reason we have all these great inventions and great thinkers in the past is because they spent hours sitting in a room not interrupted. Yeah. And we don't have that. So I honestly wonder if we're ever going to have an Einstein again. The great thing is we have now more networking, so we can communicate and create things on a larger scale. But, um, I really had to figure out how to just find time to just to be alone with myself and my work. And so his books, I think, were really helpful. Yeah, that's a great resource. The last one is if people wanted to follow you or your work, where can they go and where can they find you? It's just my name on Facebook, Andrew Crust, also Instagram, Andrew.Crust. And if you want to check out my art, I've got an Etsy page. My handle is Stick and Brush, the stick being the baton, and there are periods in between. So stick.and.brush. And make lots of visual art and even sell some. Yeah, that's awesome.

J**Jason Duff** 44:04

Andrew, thank you. It's been great to have you on the show today. Um, appreciate your passion behind what you do and how accessible you make it to other people. Um, it, it really is something that I think for a lot of us listening, it's like we're always looking for ways to plug in and give back. And if you maybe have been a musician in your past life, or someone poured into you or invested in you, wherever you're at today in like your business or career, find a way to pay it forward. So, and that could be, you know, serving as a volunteer with your local church choir. It could be getting involved in funding and maybe being a sponsor to, you know, one of the local musicals. Or, you know, if you're thinking about looking into an orchestra, you've heard kind of a model of what Lima has done and how it's doing it. And you're also seeing how the revitalization and the movement that's happening there is really working. And I think that arts are the base of that and finding ways— and arts, what, like Andrew said, it's not just music. It could be visual. It could be performing arts. There's all of this amazing spectrum. But find a way to elevate and promote arts in your community. But we really appreciate having you as a guest on the show today.

A**Andrew Crust** 45:19

Thank you both for all the work you do. Absolutely. Thanks.

E

Ethan DeLeon 45:21

Thanks for tuning in on this episode of the Small Nation Podcast. We hope that conversation proved valuable to you. And if you enjoyed it, be sure to share the episode and Follow the show on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or your favorite podcasting platform. You can also subscribe to the Small Nation YouTube channel if you prefer to watch your episodes. Follow Small Nation on social media, and we'll see you in the next episode.