



EPISODE THIRTY-TWO

Waving a Baton for Change

With **Teddy Abrams**

Teddy Abrams first dreamed of leading an orchestra when he was just nine years old. Barely two decades later, this musical phenom now leads both the Louisville Orchestra and Oregon's Britt Festival. But Abrams isn't just another orchestra conductor; he's reinventing what an orchestra and its music can mean for a city and its people. He now dreams about far more than just waving a baton, and he's just as comfortable hanging out with hip hop stars, bluegrass musicians, gospel choirs, and social-justice activists as he is on the podium. Join us for this week's conversation as we sit down with the conductor extraordinaire to discuss how he's using the universal language of music to break down walls and heal a city, offering a path forward not just for his community, but for humanity.

THEMES & INSIGHTS

1. Language and music fire up nearly the same circuits in the brain. Music has essentially been hard-wired into the human experience since day one.
2. Music has an almost magical ability to cross all our human barriers—age, status, race, ethnicity, everything. It can bring us together, provide a common understanding, and even heal what divides us.
3. Civic leadership doesn't begin and end with the mayor, the school superintendent, and the exec in the corner office. Everybody, including the music director of a city orchestra, has the power and the responsibility to influence their community far beyond what's in their job descriptions.



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Teddy Abrams

COMBUSTION QUOTES

🔥 "If you start with the understanding of the ultimate power of music to cut through backgrounds, to break down walls, to actually literally offer a path forward for human beings to find common ground and common ways of celebrating or of commiserating, of doing all the emotional things that we so deeply need as a society, then you can start to build a platform for how you want to arrange your life and music."

🔥 "I think if you live in a city like Louisville and let's say you come from a community that feels disenfranchised, and then suddenly, your orchestra shows up and offers a musical experience that totally connects with maybe your heritage or your background or the music that you love and care about, you feel like you belong. It inspires a sense of belonging."

CALL TO ACTION

"I think that the one thing I'd like people to leave with, especially if they're not from Louisville, is to consider that in the landscape of America right now where cities like Louisville and states like Kentucky are so often either demonized or forgotten or only talked about for one specific news story that comes up at a time... And I think that when we start extending the way we think about our fellow Americans and what the definition of our country is to ourselves and we start changing that and growing that to be far more inclusive, we're gonna get a better country out of it and we're gonna be much better citizens."

RESOURCES

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