

# Conducting change with precision and insight

Sage Intacct gives the New York Philharmonic control, accuracy, and agility behind the curtain

“We’re having deeper conversations, doing more forward-looking work. It’s a different level of finance.”

## Ashley Peña

Interim CFO, the New York Philharmonic



Photo credit: Fadi Kheir



### The challenge

With hundreds of annual performances, multiple funding sources, and complex commitments like union pensions, the New York Philharmonic needed more flexible, detailed financial tracking. Their legacy system made reporting difficult, lacked real-time visibility, and couldn't support strategic decision-making.



### The solution

The New York Philharmonic selected Sage Intacct to modernize its financial operations and enable deeper program-level insight. The system supports real-time tracking across performances, tours, education initiatives, and pension funds—replacing manual processes with intuitive reporting and empowering teams with the information they need.



### Results with Sage Intacct

Sage Intacct has modernized financial operations at the New York Philharmonic, delivering clarity, control, and confidence at every level.

- Strategic visibility into the financial impact of each concert, tour, and education program.
- Streamlined workflows that free program managers to act quickly and independently.
- Consolidated tracking of pension and endowment activity using consistent internal controls.
- Faster, more accurate reporting that supports planning, compliance, and long-term sustainability.

**Organization**  
New York Philharmonic

**Location**  
New York, US

**Industry**  
Nonprofit

**Sage Products**  
Sage Intacct

**Sage Partner**  
Baker Tilly



**About the New York Philharmonic**  
The New York Philharmonic, founded in 1842, is a global cultural icon. Based at David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, the orchestra shares extraordinary music through live performance, media, and education initiatives that reach audiences worldwide.



### About Baker Tilly

Baker Tilly is a leading advisory CPA firm that helps organizations modernize operations, improve financial visibility, and drive growth by leveraging deep industry expertise, practical solutions, and a commitment to long-term client success.

Sage



Photo credit: Chris Lee

## Elevating finance at a legendary institution

The New York Philharmonic (NY Phil) is one of the world's most iconic and influential orchestras. Founded in 1842, it is among the first orchestras founded in the United States and a cultural institution that has played a defining role in shaping the landscape of classical music. Today, the NY Phil performs more than 100 subscription concerts annually, tours internationally, commissions new works, and delivers community education programming across New York City — all with the precision and artistry that audiences expect from the stage.

Behind the scenes, it's a complex, high-volume operation with a nonprofit mission and high expectations. The NY Phil's finance team must ensure accountability for restricted funds, deliver accurate program-level reporting, and help program managers plan and pivot confidently in real time. For years, their legacy accounting software stood in the way. That changed with the move to Sage Intacct.

### Old system was out of tune

Before adopting Sage Intacct, the NY Phil relied on a decades-old Blackbaud installation that couldn't keep up with the organization's complexity or pace of change. "We had basically outgrown it," says Ashley Peña, Interim CFO for the NY Phil.

"Everything was manual. Nothing integrated. Just getting monthly reports to budget managers meant exporting, manipulating data, and emailing PDFs that were outdated the moment they were sent."

She describes a lack of trust in the data, version control issues, and a time-consuming reporting process that delayed strategic decisions. "We didn't even have an accounts receivable module. That meant certain receivables were scattered in spreadsheets," she adds. "We were losing track of things. The entire experience was inefficient and brittle."

Ashley, who had previously implemented Sage Intacct at another performing arts organization, knew exactly what the NY Phil needed — and what Sage Intacct could deliver. "I knew the dimensionality of the general ledger would give us the flexibility to evolve. And I knew my team could spend more time on qualitative work instead of chasing numbers."

### Performing with precision and flexibility

The finance team went live with Sage Intacct in November 2021. Today, they use dimensions including department, program, and location to manage hundreds of performances, education events, and donor-supported initiatives.



Photo credit: Chris Lee

Sage Intacct helps the New York Philharmonic align financial strategy with artistic ambition.

The transition to Sage Intacct was seamless, thanks to their implementation partner, who understood both nonprofit finance and the NY Phil's operating model. "We weren't handed a template," Ashley notes. "We were guided through decisions that made sense for how we work—and that made all the difference."

Now, each concert series, tour, or community event can be tracked like its own income statement—an essential capability for planning, analysis, and long-term sustainability.

"It lets us have a strategic conversation around which programs are artistic priorities that may not break even—and which need to bring in more to support those efforts," Ashley explains. "That level of granularity helps us plan thoughtfully without losing sight of our mission."

#### **Clarity across entities and obligations**

Daily access to reliable financial data also empowers program managers to act quickly and confidently. "We've built dashboards that are intuitive and easy to use," she says. "Managers can see if they're missing an invoice or have a prepaid that needs attention. I don't hear from them nearly as often—because they have what they need."

Sage Intacct also enables the NY Phil to manage multiple entities—including two separate complex employee pension plans—within a single system. Previously, those pension records were kept in spreadsheets. "It was definitely less than ideal," Ashley admits. "Now we can apply the same internal controls and reporting structure we use for operating and endowment accounts."

Using the Sage Intacct dimensional structure, the finance team can easily segment pension-related transactions from general operations and donor funds. This keeps reporting clean and defensible—especially when addressing union obligations or preparing for audits. "We no longer have to do gymnastics to show where the money is," Ashley says. "It's right there in the system, clearly labeled and accurate."

#### **Trusted data, strategic leadership**

With Sage Intacct in place, the finance team spends less time on manual tasks and more time advising the organization. "We're having more productive conversations with our board and our finance and executive committees," Ashley says. "Because our reports are based on solid data, our stakeholders have more confidence in the numbers—and in us."

That confidence has strategic implications. When negotiating new initiatives, such as tours or international performances, the finance team can quickly surface historical program-level financials. "We've had leadership changes, and institutional memory doesn't always carry forward," Ashley explains. "Being able to pull a P&L from a past event—with all the detail we need—helps us evaluate whether a proposal makes financial sense."

That visibility extends to development and grant tracking as well. With real-time access, Ashley's team can provide development officers with timely insights on donor activity and grant utilization—before month-end.



Photo credit: Brandon Patoc

**“Being able to pull a P&L from a past event — with all the detail we need — helps us evaluate whether a proposal makes financial sense.”**

**Ashley Peña**

Interim CFO, the New York Philharmonic

“We don’t have to wait for the books to close,” she says. “We can support conversations as they’re happening.”

The time savings are proving to be strategic. “Now I can step back and think critically about what the numbers mean,” Ashley says. “We’re having deeper conversations, doing more forward-looking work. It’s a different level of finance.”

**Built to grow with the orchestra**

As the New York Philharmonic enters a bold new chapter under incoming music director Gustavo Dudamel, Sage Intacct will be key to supporting innovation and expansion.

“The initiatives Gustavo is envisioning go beyond anything we’ve done before,” Ashley says. “It’s exciting — and a huge relief knowing our accounting system can adapt to whatever comes next.”

With future integrations on the horizon and plans to expand reporting and dashboard functionality even further, Ashley is confident the system can grow with them. “Sage Intacct doesn’t try to do everything,” she says. “It does what it does extremely well — and integrates with other best-in-class tools. That’s exactly what we need.”



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