

*Harmony*TM

FORUM OF THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INSTITUTE

NUMBER 4 • APRIL 1997

Publisher's Notes

by

Paul R. Judy



To subscribe to *Harmony* or provide support to the Institute, contact:

Symphony Orchestra Institute

1618 Orrington Avenue, Suite 318

Evanston, IL 60201

Tel: 847.475.5001 Fax: 847.475.2460

e-mail: information@soi.org

www.soi.org

Publisher's Notes

Welcome to the fourth issue of *Harmony!* We think you will find this issue to be the most thought-provoking yet! But first, a few administrative notes.

As perhaps you observed on the inside front cover, we are restructuring the governance of the Institute. These new arrangements are described in more detail on page viii. And we have moved our office to Evanston, Illinois, where Meg Posey has joined us as administrator. We have also changed our telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Please make a note of these details.

We thank those dedicated people who helped launch the Institute and welcome many new minds and hands to assist with future tasks. These are ongoing steps to build a solid foundation for Institute programs over the longer term.

Moving to the central content of this issue, we continue in our exploration of the unique dynamics of symphony orchestra organizations. A number of the essays will remind readers of the large and, in many cases, untapped human potential which resides in these organizations. More particularly, participants and observers are beginning to suggest how symphony orchestra organizations might change or are, in fact, changing to become better functioning and more effective institutions.

Preceding any “organizational change” process, there is often a turning point at which the leadership from different organizational sectors embraces new ways of thinking and relating, a time when organizational trust begins an upward trend. The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra organization passed through such a point a few years back, and the subsequent transformation provides a good example of the change which is possible in the orchestral workplace. This issue of *Harmony!* opens with a review of this change as expressed by some of the key participants and is followed by some personal thoughts from the NJSO executive director, **Larry Tamburri**.

In every symphony organization, the orchestra is the central work group; it produces the primary artistic work product. To audiences and community, musicians are the most obvious and necessary participants in an orchestral organization. Operating much more in the background, however, is a cadre of volunteers whose leadership, service, and support are absolutely vital to the success of any American orchestral organization. The significance of these human resources, and the policies and attitudes needed to develop and nourish them, merit broader understanding. We asked **Mike Gehret** to give *Harmony!* readers an expert's view on what he aptly describes as the “volunteer-centered” orchestra organization.

As is the case in all nonprofit and for-profit institutions, the board of directors has final legal responsibility for and authority over the affairs of a symphony orchestra organization. The board must ensure that the organization has clear goals and the leadership and resources to achieve them. When board responsibilities are fulfilled poorly, and when the situation is exacerbated by other organizational dysfunction, disaster can result. The demise of the Oakland (California) Symphony Orchestra some 10 years ago provides a case in point. The essay by **Meg Posey** and **Paul Judy**, based on an extensively documented history of the Oakland situation, summarizes the lessons which we can learn from an organizational failure.

As noted in the Research Update (page 44) the doctoral research projects of **Arthur Brooks** and **John Breda**, which commenced in 1996, have taken longer to complete than originally contemplated, but both projects continue to look very worthwhile. Brooks recently finished his research and Breda should do so within a few months. The Institute is now considering publication plans. During 1996, the Institute was also pleased to become acquainted with a very interesting inquiry into the comparative organizational decision-making processes of three British orchestra organizations being carried out by **Sally Maitlis**, a doctoral candidate at the University of Sheffield. On pages 45 to 55, Sally describes her research project and presents some preliminary findings.

Musicians often complain that they are insufficiently involved in decision making within their organizations. Management complains equally often that musicians generally do not want to devote the time and learning required for such involvement and, further, that musicians don't wish to have any responsibility for outcomes. Many musicians feel by reason of interest, education, and experience they could well be more involved in their organizations' artistic policy and decision making. An eloquent commentator on this subject is **James Orleans**, a bassist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Jim is a knowledgeable champion of 20th-century music and a devotee of its role in revitalizing the orchestral repertoire. Especially refreshing in Jim's message is a call to fellow musicians to become more active, assert more leadership, make a greater investment, and assume more responsibility in their organizations.

The role of the "conductor"—especially when incorporated into the role of "principal conductor" or "music director"—is very significant in the dynamics of a modern symphony orchestra organization. The personal and professional attributes, behavior, and leadership of this position's occupant can significantly influence the climate of the orchestral workplace. Many of the ambiguities of this organizational role go back some 150 years to the emergence of the "maestro" in Europe, as transplanted to North America at the turn of the century. Working together, **Marilyn Fischer** and **Isaiah Jackson** explore the historic myths and philosophies connected with this role and then postulate for it a new and more contemporary vision, along with some ways to implement that vision.

In a fitting sequence, **Taavo Virkhaus** stands back and critiques his role as a music director and guest conductor. Taavo points out the many mundane,

earthbound, and mortal constraints of this job and how the times require a much more egalitarian approach—which the author applauds. At the same time, a central task of a good conductor is to inspire magical sound from an orchestra and good conductors must therefore possess some of that magic themselves.

With the score fragment on the cover, **Phillip Huscher** once again titillates our knowledge and our curiosity. A clue: the score's composer had a significant role in the development of orchestral music and organization. Who was this unusual person?

Any manager or scholar interested in staying current with advanced organizational theory and practice is faced with a plethora of newly published books. A few are outstanding; many are interesting but repetitive; some are blatantly poor. Some have insights which easily carry over to symphony organizations; others have messages or approaches which are less obviously applicable. The vertical and horizontal compartmentalization within symphony organizations has long been intriguing. These well-marked "boundaries" exist in many organizations, including some of the largest and most bureaucratic. *The Boundaryless Organization: Breaking the Chains of Organizational Structure* explores these organizational patterns in a very readable and effective way, and the observations have special applicability to symphony organizations. We recommend this book to our readers, who will find a taste of the content on page 93.

We continue to welcome manuscript ideas and submissions and stand ready to provide editorial suggestions, from broadly conceptual to very detailed. We sense that many participants want better functioning symphony organizations, are developing greater awareness of the possibilities of organizational change, and have insights and ideas to present. We hope more and more people will use *Harmony* as a forum for these thoughts and suggestions.

On page 96, we are pleased to publish additions to a bibliography of research and writings about symphony orchestra organizations. We will continue to publish extensions of this bibliography in each issue of *Harmony* and will publish an updated cumulative listing this fall.

Readers continue to send in encouraging thoughts about *Harmony* presentations and Institute direction. On page 97, you will find some recent comments. We hope readers and observers will continue to send in suggestions and impressions.

On page 100, we list those symphony orchestra organizations which, as of March 10, have committed to 1997 support of the Institute. We thank you! With this issue of *Harmony*, we hope to gather additional support and present a longer list in the fall. If your organization is not in the list, please have the proper person fill in and return the Supporting Organization Register bound into the back of this issue. A suggested level of contribution support for 1997 is given in the table on page 101.

If you are a symphony organization participant, we encourage you to have *Harmony* mailed directly to your home or office. To do so, fill out and send in the postcard inserted in this issue or telephone, fax, or e-mail your request to us. If you are a nonparticipant and wish to have an individual or group subscription, there is an application for that purpose bound into the back of this issue.

Lastly, we can all benefit from a reminder about the pronouns we tend to use and the positive or negative effect they can have on those around us. So, as you view the inside back cover, remember that “practice makes perfect.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Judy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P".