

*Harmony*TM

FORUM OF THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INSTITUTE
NUMBER 14 • APRIL 2002

Publisher's Notes

by

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There is much attention given these days to the fact that the musical leadership in a large number of prominent North American orchestras is changing. The New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra have designated conductors who have previously led large American organizations. The orchestras in Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Houston, and Minnesota have named music directors who are important musicians, although they have not previously been the artistic leaders of large American symphony organizations.

It seems reasonable to assume that in all those search processes, there was considerable discussion about how each organization defined and described the position of music director, and what combination of assets were needed to address the organization's issues. For many of our symphony organizations, recent issues have included the place of the symphony orchestra in the community; the growth of the audience for symphonic music; performance of new and recent music; the current place of the arts in public education; and anxiety about our ability to fund our symphony institutions.

American symphony organizations are unique in the way they function. They are funded differently from those in other countries; their governance structures and responsibilities are different from those in other countries; and perhaps we feel somewhat differently about our roles and responsibilities in society. It is likely that decisions are made somewhat differently here than elsewhere. In the midst of all the artistic leadership change taking place in America's orchestras, it is appropriate to ask what we want from our new artistic leaders.

In August 2002, the Boston Symphony Orchestra hosted a symposium at Tanglewood to ask important questions about the role of the music director in the orchestra of the 21st century. The Institute is pleased to publish the report of that symposium, as prepared by **Thomas Wolf** and **Gina Perille** of Wolf, Keens & Company. The symposium looks to be an important first step in a process the Institute hopes will become an ongoing discussion within and among symphony organizations. We use a constant term—symphony orchestra—to describe a constantly changing entity. It therefore is imperative to define the role of music director in ways that are appropriate for today's orchestra organizations, as well as for those of the future.

Because we remain committed to fostering positive change in symphony orchestra organizations, it is with considerable pride that this issue of *Harmony* presents the report of the Symphony Orchestra Institute's work with the Philadelphia Orchestra. The report, authored by **Paul Boulian**, represents the Institute's work as part of a larger facilitated change initiative taking place within the Philadelphia organization. It details ways in which representatives of the

orchestra's constituencies examined governance, leadership, and professional development issues within the organization. The result is a set of recommendations to the orchestra's board of directors.

The specific recommendations were designed for the Philadelphia organization. In reporting the recommendations, the Institute does not intend to put them forward as appropriate for other organizations. But we do hope the report can provide a structure to help other symphony organizations that want to examine their own thinking about governance and leadership.

When we think about the place of the American symphony orchestra as a community resource, it is inevitable that education comes quickly to mind. All our orchestras play concerts directed specifically toward young people. Sometimes those performances are didactic in nature, sometimes exploratory, sometimes entertaining. **Jon Deak** is a prominent American composer who, in one of his other lives, is a bassist with the New York Philharmonic. His music is widely performed and his unique, identifiable voice is one of his most remarkable gifts. He chose to try to make the symphony orchestra available to children in a new way. It is not very difficult to imagine that a composer would be sensitive to the creative process, but this composer imagined that he could guide young children through the creative process of writing music for the symphony orchestra. Along with his desire to have young children experience the joy of that creativity, he values them as composers and, as a result, they quite naturally trust that he understands their vulnerability as creators. When I read his story, my wish is to have been a child in the company of Jon Deak.

Site visits with supporting orchestra organizations have been a regular part of the Institute's field program. These visits make certain we are familiar with current thinking and practices in the industry. About 18 months ago, I was invited to visit with the Cleveland Orchestra. At one point, while casually looking around the beautifully renovated Severance Hall, I wandered into the "rogues' gallery," the room in which the Musical Arts Association displays the portraits of past board presidents. I recognized the portrait of Ward Smith, about whom I have come to think as a model among symphony board presidents. There beneath the portrait, the term of his tenure was indicated. I thought it was a remarkably long term; he served as president from 1983 to 1995. But as I went around the room, it became apparent that a long term was the norm among Cleveland board presidents. It was the first time I had seen so dramatic a representation of a culture of long-term leadership in an American symphony organization.

It made a strong impression because, nearly always when I visit a troubled symphony organization, I find that tradition or bylaws have established a practice of short-term board leadership. We at the Institute resolved to look more deeply at the tenure issue. The result is the section in this issue of *Harmony* that puts forward the leadership-tenure culture of three organizations: two of long-standing prominence, and one which those of us with hindsight of a short 25 years might think of as a remarkable turnaround. All were asked to contribute to this issue

because they are organizations that are operating effectively, have been doing so for years, and share the experience of having had long-term board presidents. Not incidentally, in recent years each has addressed the appointment of a music director, and thereby the question of the role of the music director in the contemporary American orchestra.

Little did we know that as we looked deeper, we would discover that they share more than a practice of long tenure for board presidents. Common among them is also the long-tenured service of a larger group of board leaders. Our thanks to **Tom Morris**, executive director of the Cleveland Orchestra, **Roland Valliere**, executive director of the Kansas City Symphony, and **Nancy Bechtle** and **Brent Assink**, immediate past board president and executive director, respectively, of the San Francisco Symphony, for their contributions to our exploration.

As you read this special section, consider the common thinking among our contributors, and as you do, remember that the participants from each orchestra were unaware of what the others were saying. We chose to group these orchestras together because we thought it would be interesting to test our hypothesis that long-term leadership has been an important factor in each organization's success. We think it is an interesting notion, but we put it forward only as hypothesis. We are aware that other organizations might have very different opinions about this topic. If you do, we invite you to write about those opinions and to share your thinking with the readers of *Harmony*.

Our series on Organization Change, which has been posted regularly on our Web site and featured in our periodic e-mail bulletin, **Key Notes from SOI**, has had three additional installments since publication of the October 2001 issue of *Harmony*. The new postings deal with the concept of organization culture. The series to date is summarized beginning on page 65. Reading and links related to the topics are provided on our Web site following the text. We extend a special thanks to **Laura Leigh Roelofs** who has now completed her contribution to this series.

Have you identified the score fragment on the cover of this issue of *Harmony*? Can you relate it to one of the orchestras featured in this issue? Phillip Huscher can, and has. You will find his colorful story on page 70.

In the pages which immediately follow these notes, we report several important developments at the Institute.

- ◆ We welcome Katie Byrne as the Institute's communications specialist.
- ◆ We introduce the newly appointed members of the Institute's Board of Advisors, and acknowledge the continuing Advisors and Directors.
- ◆ We acknowledge the support of contributors to Advocates of Change—a commitment from individuals throughout North America to foster effective symphony orchestra organizations.

- ◆ We report the support and encouragement of the Institute's work over the past 12 months by symphony orchestra organizations.

As I complete my first introduction to *Harmony* since becoming the Institute's president in December 2001, I want to thank not only those who have generously contributed to this issue, but also the many colleagues and friends who have communicated to wish me well. The Institute is a work-in-progress—as are our beloved orchestras. My energy for the work is high, and I look forward to your input and encouragement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fred Zeno". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.