

# *Harmony*

FORUM OF THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INSTITUTE  
NUMBER 16 • OCTOBER 2003

## Publisher's Notes by

Frederick Zenone

### **Symphony Orchestra Institute**

P.O. Box 8619

Northfield, IL 60093

Tel: 847.441.5037

e-mail: [information@soi.org](mailto:information@soi.org)

Website: [www.soi.org](http://www.soi.org)

---

## Publisher's Notes

While we read almost daily about the financial challenges that American orchestras are facing, we rarely read in the popular press about a range of challenges that some orchestras are facing in collaborative and imaginative ways. In this issue of *Harmony*, in addition to reporting about the dramatic progress that one orchestra has made in addressing its financial crisis, we direct your attention to other orchestras engaged in addressing the challenges of changing roles, shared responsibilities, inclusive governance, bold vision, and collaborative planning. In the long term, it is likely that the core work of boards will still be governance, staff members will still manage, and musicians will still make music. But there is a new dialogue about the limitations of rigid boundaries for those roles and responsibilities.

In 2002, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) completed an 18-month strategic-planning exercise that included representatives from all orchestra constituencies. Through that exercise, the organization had decided who and what it wanted to become. It now faced the question of how to get there. During the course of their strategic-planning work, members of the organization had developed a taste for rigorous cross-constituency deliberation. The SPCO invited the Symphony Orchestra Institute to help its constituencies develop a deliberative process that would take the strategic plan from words on paper to actions, while at the same time undertaking a renewal of the collective bargaining agreement between the SPCO and its musicians.

To undertake such an examination as an organization is challenging; to do so while intending to arrive at a contract renewal is an unusually bold step because it requires careful reexamination of positions and practices that have been in place for a long time. Those who participated in the SPCO's contract renewal process became introspective in deeply deliberative, collaborative, and inclusive ways. Much of what the Contract Renewal Group addressed in Saint Paul has rarely been addressed within American symphony organizations, and if it has been addressed, the work has been done on a much smaller, single-constituency level in which it could be assumed that people were of like opinion.

In this issue of *Harmony*, there are four articles prepared by some of the leaders of this journey. Bruce Coppock and Lowell Noteboom have written from their respective positions as president and board chair of the SPCO. The five musicians, Kyu-Young Kim, Tom Kornacker, Sarah Lewis, Charles Ullery, and Herb Winslow, who served as members of the Contract Renewal

Group, share their thoughts through an Institute roundtable. And Paul Boulian describes the process that the participants used to acknowledge their shared values and to move in the direction of making decisions as one constituency without feeling threats to their individual identities.

Trust and its care and feeding are central to the success of this kind of journey. So, too, is a belief that tension and disagreement are not necessarily destructive. Both conditions existed in Saint Paul. The SPCO's bold experiment produced a plan unlike any other we know in American orchestras. We hope it will provoke serious thinking about our orchestra world. It is bound to produce vigorous conversation.

The Orchestra of St. Luke's represents a different model of how an organization began and how it grew. As Marianne Lockwood, St. Luke's president and executive director, explains, it began as a chamber music organization and only later became an orchestra. Along the way, the organization took with it the values of inclusiveness, collaboration, and shared goals that are common practice in the world of chamber music. As audience members, we know what those values produce in chamber-music performance. The Orchestra of St. Luke's gives us a glimpse at what those values produced at an organizational level.

It is notable that as is preferred by the musicians, St. Luke's remains a per-service orchestra. Working from a core of players, the organization adds and subtracts personnel from a select cadre of musicians on an as-needed basis, depending on the repertoire. It's a practice reminiscent of the larger-scale London Symphony Orchestra in its earlier days as was described in *Harmony* #13. This structure has also been the practice of orchestras in many smaller U.S. cities. The Orchestra of St. Luke's is a flourishing example of this model.

For the past three and one-half years, 15 American orchestras have participated in an initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The effort is intended to bring meaningful change to the orchestra industry by sharing what is learned in the 15 orchestra "laboratories." Catherine Maciariello is the foundation's program officer for the initiative. This past June, she addressed many in attendance at the American Symphony Orchestra League's conference in San Francisco. We are pleased to share with *Harmony* readers her remarks about the genesis, results to date, and future challenges of this program.

The Saint Louis Symphony could be the "canary in the mine" metaphor for many of us. And in this case, the canary has returned to the surface to sing. This orchestra has been ambitious in striving toward excellence and ambitious to present its excellence widely. The organization created practices and programs that were imitated models, but ultimately found its high ideals and broad ambitions truly beyond its financial grasp. The crisis was sobering. *Harmony* editor Marilyn Scholl chronicles the organization's journey from near

catastrophe toward stabilization and a bright future. It is a story of leadership, sacrifice, difficult choices, and the awakening of community conscience, all directed at saving a great community resource.

The suburbs of many American cities are homes to dozens of smaller-budget orchestras playing the classical repertoire regularly. Elgin, Illinois is one of those suburbs. The Elgin Symphony Orchestra came to the Institute's attention by virtue of the rapid growth of its budget. When we began to inquire, we learned that the organization attributes its success to a rigorous, collaborative, annual strategic-planning process—a process that includes representatives of all constituencies—that focuses on matching a goal of ever-stronger artistic product with financial reality. We thank Doris Gallant, Michael Pastreich, Emanuel Semerad, Tim Shaffer, and John Totten for participating in an Institute roundtable to take readers inside the organization's planning process.

In *Harmony* #15, we published a speech that Penelope McPhee, vice president and chief program officer of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, had delivered to a gathering of participants in the foundation's "Magic of Music" initiative. We invited reader response to "Orchestra and Community: Bridging the Gap." Markand Thakar accepted our invitation and offers his views as to why orchestras are reluctant to make the changes for which the Knight Foundation calls. Thakar brings to his essay his dual perspectives as music director of the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra in Minnesota and co-director of the graduate conducting program at Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. We thank him for taking keyboard in hand to remind us of the value of differing opinions.

We also thank Karen Schnackenberg, chief orchestra librarian of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and a member of the Institute's Board of Advisors, for reminding us that not all collaborative, cross-constituency undertakings need be vast of scale. Karen is a strong proponent of the notion that orchestra librarians are both musicians and administrators, and that thought comes through clearly in her essay to describe two successful initiatives in her orchestra.

In this issue's final essay, Gideon Toeplitz challenges readers to consider seriously what must change if American symphony orchestras are to survive and thrive. Gideon is a 30-year veteran of orchestra management and many of these thoughts have been on his mind for a long time. It was Gideon who oversaw the introduction of Hoshin to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (as reported in *Harmony* #7) and his passion for the music, as well as his determination that American orchestras work smarter, resounds in his essay.

For nine years, the Symphony Orchestra Institute has published *Harmony* as a periodical. This 16th issue is our largest. *Harmony* has become the central

forum for information and discussion about better-functioning symphony organizations

However, we at the Institute have come to a time when we must ask difficult questions and make difficult decisions about how to use our resources. As you will note in the statement that follows, we are no longer able to meet the human and financial demands of periodical publishing. We do intend to pursue activities that will merit publication from time to time, whether in print or on the web.

This year, for instance, we have worked with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. The work with the SPCO is reported in depth in this issue. We think it is some of the most important field work we have done. The Institute will continue to undertake different kinds of fields projects where it is felt we can be effective.

We are proud of the 16 issues of *Harmony* that are now archived, with search capabilities, on our website. Our newly expanded bibliography, also available on the website, is a vital resource for information about symphony organizations and their development. It will be useful for many years ahead.

This final issue of *Harmony* and the prior 15 issues were produced only with the time, dedication, and hard work of many. Those who have written for the journal have been reflective, informative, and often provocative while always pointing us toward positive change. We want to acknowledge the passion and expertise of *Harmony* editor Marilyn Scholl and the dedication of David Scholl and Katie Byrne for their work with publication, distribution, the website, and communications. Many thanks also to Phillip Huscher whose erudition and cover choices have 16 times reminded us and our readers that this is indeed a great art we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Zeno". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "Z" and "o".

---

## To Our Readers

This 16th issue will be the final publication of *Harmony* by the Institute, in its present form and on a regular, periodic basis. The Institute has concluded that the content-development process, management and operational requirements, and expense of publishing *Harmony* on a regular, periodic basis are now beyond its human and financial resources.

We will maintain our website, < [www.soi.org](http://www.soi.org) > , and an archive of prior *Harmony* content, including that of this final periodic issue, will be posted there.

Looking to the future, we plan to continue to post on the website reports, articles, dialogue, and other content—in downloadable and printable form—which we believe address, describe, and foster, in especially pertinent ways, transformational change within symphony orchestra organizations and the industry as a whole. We may from time to time publish, print, and distribute such material under the *Harmony* name, whenever that communication avenue will be especially effective.

The Institute will also continue to foster and pursue various forms of consultation and facilitation efforts in the field, to nurture positive changes within symphony organizations and the industry as a whole, toward the preservation and enhancement of symphony orchestra organizations and the essential musical and cultural services and value they provide their communities.

---

## Editor's Thanks

The Institute's decision to discontinue publication of *Harmony* as a periodical is, as you can imagine, a cause for sadness on the part of this editor. But having edited all 16 issues, I also find it an occasion on which to offer my deepest thanks. To the 61 authors, dozens of roundtable participants and interviewees, writers of letters to the editor, and countless supporters of this publication, kudos! Your can-do spirit and willingness to share your work and your thinking in these pages has energized and emboldened an entire field.

I am in particular debt to Phillip Huscher who has 16 times carried forth our idea of gracing the cover of *Harmony* with a classical score fragment and dared you to guess what and why. Also to Beth Judy for her black- and blue-pencil proofreading of thousands of pages. And to my business partner (and spouse) David Scholl who has completed every inch of typesetting and every detail of design and production for these 16 issues. My final thanks go to Katie Byrne, our communication specialist, who has demonstrated amazing agility in knowing who you, our readers, are and where you are. You are a decidedly mobile group of more than 6,500.

Nine years ago, Marilyn Scholl was a 25-year subscriber to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, a woman who knew and loved the music, but one who had little knowledge of orchestras as organizations. In the intervening years, you have welcomed me into your concert halls and into your conversations. My life has been enriched. For that opportunity, heartfelt thanks.

