

# *Harmony*<sup>TM</sup>

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## Topical Areas of Interest



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](mailto:information@soi.org)

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

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# Topical Areas of Interest

## Introduction

**I**n its publications program, the Symphony Orchestra Institute seeks to foster a better understanding of the complex dynamics of symphony orchestra organizations. To this end, the Institute wishes to publish thoughtful insights and opinion by knowledgeable and experienced participants in and observers of these organizations. In addition to being thought-provoking and encouraging an exchange of views, it is hoped that such published opinion will suggest areas which would benefit from organizational research.

The following list of topical areas is presented to stimulate the thinking of potential authors. Some areas are larger in scale, perhaps more suitable to formal and lengthy analysis. Others are smaller and quite susceptible to shorter, experience-based commentary. Many topics fall in between.

The Institute welcomes manuscripts on these or similar topics, pursuant to its Guidelines for Contributors.

## Organizational Roles and Resources

### *General*

- ❑ How might the key roles in the typical symphony orchestra organization be better understood, in terms of the work involved, the abilities required, the performance expected, and related issues?
- ❑ What is the profile of education, experience, work, rewards, and career path of the orchestral musician? Of the executive director and other professional staff positions?
- ❑ What is the profile of motivations, expectations, work, experience, and rewards of the chief trustee? Of other trustees, and the board as a whole? The chief direct service volunteer? Other key volunteers?
- ❑ What is involved in becoming and being the music director and principal conductor?
- ❑ Are cross-perceptions of roles in symphony orchestra organizations less authentic and fact-based than in other organizations, and if so, why, how, and to what effect?

## **Musicians**

- ❑ What, if any, are the similarities or differences in the roles and tasks of various sections and players and what are the organizational effects?
- ❑ What are musician's attitudes about repertoire and programming, and how programming decisions are made? How do these matters affect the organizational attitudes of musicians?
- ❑ What physical and mental stress does an orchestral musician undergo and how does it compare with stress in other occupations?
- ❑ Does the regular performance of popular music dilute the musical competence of a symphony orchestra musician?
- ❑ Is the musician's job changing, and if so, what is the effect and how should the job be redesigned?
- ❑ What are the issues and practices involved in musician peer evaluations, such as in auditions, the granting of tenure, and the determination of musical incompetency?
- ❑ What are the issues involved in the tenure system?
- ❑ What are the organizational and leadership responsibilities of a section principal?

## **Staff**

- ❑ What are the various tasks and skills involved in staff positions in symphony orchestra organizations?
- ❑ What staff roles particularly impact organizational effectiveness?
- ❑ What staff training takes place in orchestral organizations?
- ❑ How do staff roles in symphony orchestra organizations compare with similar roles in for-profit organizations?

## **Volunteers**

- ❑ Are the profiles of volunteers—board members and others—who provide service to symphony orchestra organizations changing, and if so, why and how?
- ❑ How knowledgeable about and involved in organizational operations and relationships should board members become?
- ❑ How do symphony orchestra organizations determine the work which volunteers will perform, and how are these people recruited, trained, structured, and integrated with employees?

### ***Music Direction***

- How is the role of music director defined, and has it changed historically?
- What is involved in the overall musical and artistic direction? Who does what; how is it organized?
- What is involved in being an “excellent” conductor?
- If a music director becomes a celebrity, what, if any, are the organizational effects?
- What are the organizational implications of music director non-residency?
- Should musician opinion surveys of conductors be broadly available?

### **Organizational Structure and Process**

#### ***Structure***

- What are the overall organizational structures, and group and role responsibilities, in the typical symphony orchestra organization?
- What are typical governance and management structures and responsibilities, and what is their history?
- Do the structures and processes of symphony orchestra organizations tend to vary by stratified patterns?
- Are there informal structures and networks in these organizations, and if so, what are their patterns?
- What structural or process innovations are being tried?
- What is the effect of physical and intellectual propinquity in the functioning of the typical symphony orchestra organization?

#### ***Mission***

- How, and how well, do symphony orchestra organizations develop, express, and implement statements of mission, goals, objectives, and strategies?
- How clear, specific, inspiring, and sound are these statements?
- How deeply and broadly are these beliefs and aspirations shared throughout the organization?
- Have measures of prospective performance also been adopted?
- How are constituents involved?

### ***Engagement and Involvement***

- ❑ How and to what extent are musicians, staff, and active volunteers engaged and challenged by their participation in symphony orchestra organizations?
- ❑ How are musicians currently involved in internal organizational processes such as, or in addition to, management and music director selection; programming; touring; the audition, probation, and tenure processes? Other involvements? How engaging are these activities? How should musicians be more involved and engaged, or should they?
- ❑ How are board members involved in operational processes, and should and how might that involvement be extended?
- ❑ In the typical situation, who is sharing in what operational information and when? Why is this the arrangement?
- ❑ What are the typical interpersonal communication patterns in symphony orchestra organizations?
- ❑ How are smaller teams of various forms being used throughout the organization?
- ❑ How changeable over time are organizational processes and systems, and how do these changes come about?
- ❑ What advanced human resource management practices in industry might be used in symphony orchestra organizations?

### ***Rewards and Recognition***

- ❑ Are musicians, staff, and volunteers rewarded and recognized for excellent performance and service? What systems and practices are utilized?
- ❑ Do reward and recognition systems and practices support smaller-team as well as total organizational performance?

### ***Personal and Professional Development***

- ❑ What systems and practices are used within symphony orchestra organizations to enrich the personal and professional growth of musicians, staff employees, and volunteers?

### ***Leadership***

- ❑ What are the leadership roles in the typical symphony orchestra organization?
- ❑ What do participants in symphony orchestra organizations expect of their leadership?

- ❑ What do constituencies and communities expect? Are these expectations stable or changing?
- ❑ What musician leadership roles exist in a symphony orchestra?
- ❑ What is and what might desirably be the participation of musicians in the overall leadership functions within a typical symphony orchestra organization?
- ❑ How might modern concepts and “best practices” of leadership apply to symphony orchestra organizations?

## **Broad Organizational Topics**

### ***Economics***

- ❑ What fresh insights can be brought to the economics of symphony orchestra organizations?
- ❑ Is it possible for the internal inflation rate of symphony orchestra organizations to be less than or equal to the general inflation rate in the economy in which they operate, and if so, how?
- ❑ How might symphony orchestra organizations achieve greater productivity, and should that be a goal?

### ***Growth***

- ❑ Many for-profit corporations seek and are expected to achieve growth in the corporation’s equity value, and such growth is usually accompanied by growth in organizational and financial size, with regularly expanding personal, professional, and financial opportunities for many employees. What, if anything, are the counterparts of these phenomena in symphony orchestra organizations?

### ***Effectiveness***

- ❑ Can effectiveness and conditions contributing to it be measured?
- ❑ What steps can (must?) a symphony orchestra organization take to become more effective?
- ❑ Can symphony orchestra organizations be compared as to the level of effectiveness?

### ***Value***

- ❑ Can the constituency and community value of a symphony orchestra organization, and change in such value, be measured? Constituent inputs are reasonably quantifiable, but are outputs/benefits so qualitative and subjective as to be immeasurable, and not subject to any reliable form of judgment?

- ❑ What do constituencies expect of the symphony orchestra organizations they sustain?

### ***Technology***

- ❑ How are advances in information technology impacting, or going to impact, internal structures and processes of symphony orchestra organizations?

## **Comparative Organizational Topics**

### ***Discontinued U.S. Organizations***

- ❑ What organizational issues contributed to the termination of various North American symphony orchestra organizations over the last 10 years? What insights and lessons are to be learned? What factors should all parties consider when an organizational termination is a possible alternative?

### ***U.S. Self-governing Orchestra Organizations***

- ❑ What are self-governing orchestra organizations, and how do they function?
- ❑ How do their resources, structures, processes, and leadership compare with more traditional formats?
- ❑ What are their strengths and weaknesses?

### ***London Orchestra Organizations***

- ❑ How are these self-governing orchestra organizations structured and functioning?
- ❑ How do they compare with their U.S. counterparts?
- ❑ What are their economics?

### ***European Organizations***

- ❑ How are the leading European symphony orchestra organizations structured, and how do they operate?
- ❑ What are their economics?
- ❑ What primary organizational issues do they face?

### ***Opera Organizations***

- ❑ How are the leading opera organizations in the U.S. and abroad structured, and how do they operate?
- ❑ How do these organizational formats compare with those of most North American symphony orchestra organizations?