

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

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## Paul R. Judy Awarded Gold Baton

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## Paul R. Judy Awarded Gold Baton

During the 57th National Conference of the American Symphony Orchestra League, which was held in June in Philadelphia, Paul R. Judy, founder and chairman of the Symphony Orchestra Institute, was awarded the League's Gold Baton.

The award, the League's highest, has been presented annually since 1948, and honors distinguished service to music and the arts. The Gold Baton recognizes institutions and individuals whose contributions to the American orchestra world extend beyond a single orchestra to influence and advance the cause of orchestras and symphonic music throughout the country. Past recipients include Leonard Bernstein, Pierre Boulez, Carnegie Hall, Aaron Copland, and Isaac Stern.

Paul Judy formed the Institute in 1995 to foster positive change in the ways symphony orchestra organizations function, to enhance their value in their communities, and to help ensure their preservation as unique and valuable cultural institutions. In December 2001, he stepped back from the Institute's day-to-day activities, but continues as the organization's chairman.

The award was presented by Robert Levine, principal violist of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and, at the time of the presentation, chair of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM). Robert's words of presentation and Paul's words of acceptance follow.

*Robert Levine:*

It is a great honor to be able to present this award to Paul. I have presented batons before, generally to conductors who accidentally lobbed them in my direction. But I've never been happy doing so; it feels too much like giving them a second chance to hit the target.

I first met Paul Judy in 1994, when he was visiting orchestras and people in the field to learn about the state of our business and to figure out what he could do to make a difference.

Three things struck me about him, aside from the obvious force of his personality. The first was that he asked good questions, the kind of questions that were hard to answer because they were questions I should have been asking myself, but could not see clearly enough to do so. The second was even more unusual; he listened very carefully and very intently to my attempts to answer those questions. It was actually quite daunting to be listened to with that degree of attention. The third thing that became clear to me about Paul was that he was driven not only

by a desire to make a contribution to our field (which many of us share), but also by a curiosity about why things happen the way they do—a curiosity as strong as my own. It was as though I had just met another member of a very small secret club. Paul had, of course, a different perspective, in the strictest sense of the word, from mine. But the fascination with the uniqueness of our field was the same.

It's been most interesting to watch the co-evolution of Paul Judy and his Institute. I've benefited directly from his search to find ways to influence the field for the better. Few musicians get to work with their fathers so publicly as Paul invited my father and me to do in the pages of *Harmony*. It was an opportunity that meant even more to my father, perhaps, than it did to me, and something for which I will always be grateful.

It was probably inevitable that someone with Paul's long history of making things happen, rather than simply studying why things didn't happen, would move towards an active effort to encourage change. And it was equally inevitable that, with his fascination for organizational dynamics, the change that he would try to encourage would be systemic institutional change, rather than just trying to show us how to do what we were doing better than we had.

When we talk about institutional change, it's important that we try to understand why we should talk about change at all. It's easy to turn change into a panacea. In a sense, it's a truism that, as the bass sings in the great aria in part three of the *Messiah*, "we shall all be changed," whether we wish it or not. But the kind of change that Paul and the Institute study and work toward is not a panacea, nor is it inevitable. In some ways, orchestras are among the most static institutions in Western civilization. I have no doubt that if I were transported back in time to, say, the premiere of a Beethoven symphony and handed a viola, I could sit down in the viola section and manage not to get noticed for at least a movement or two. Of very few professions or institutions in Western society could that be said.

We have some profoundly successful and stable orchestras in this country that, frankly, don't need to change to survive; they will survive anything short of a large asteroid. And we have a few orchestras which no conceivable institutional change will rescue from a permanent state of crisis or worse. For some orchestras, institutional change is a necessary condition of survival. But the others either don't need it to survive or it won't help.

And for no orchestra is institutional change a sufficient condition for survival. Such change—if successful—will make orchestras easier to lead. But it will not obviate the need for leadership, on all levels and within all constituencies. Leaders may be made and not born, but the making is still a black art at worst and a very labor-intensive process at best. I learned most of what I know about leadership from spending almost two years in the pocket of a very gifted labor leader during a horrible period in my orchestra's history. The rest I learned from making lots of mistakes and getting very frank feedback from those who were affected

by them. Is there any other way to learn leadership except lots of practice and one-on-one instruction?

The real imperative for institutional change isn't, at the end of the day, practical; it's a moral imperative. There is a scene in a book I grew up with that makes this point wonderfully. The book is *Hornblower and the Atropos* by C. S. Forester. The scene is one in which young Captain Hornblower has just been presented to the King by Admiral Lord St. Vincent, First Lord of the Admiralty. Hornblower is taking his rather nervous leave of St. Vincent.

St. Vincent stood looking at him from under his eyebrows.

"The navy has two duties, Hornblower," he said. "We all know what one is—to fight the French and give Boney what for."

"Yes, my Lord?"

"The other one we don't think about so much. We have to see that when we go we leave behind us a navy which is better than the one in which we served. . . . Choose carefully, Hornblower, if it ever becomes your duty. One can make mistakes, but let them be honest mistakes."

I believe we have a moral obligation to leave our orchestras better than we found them—especially when there's so much room for improvement. And that means we need to change our institutions. Just looking from where I sit, we've created workplaces where orchestra musicians enjoy a living wage or better, wonderful benefits, lots of time away from the workplace for leisure or other professional pursuits, and tremendous job security. We owe a great debt to those who made this possible—board members and funders working together (although some would be surprised to hear it) with the trade union activists among us who practiced activism when it was very unpopular with our employers and even our own union.

But what we haven't created is a workplace that the musicians enjoy. And given the nature of the work—using the skills we learned for the sheer joy of playing to experience some of the greatest creations of the human mind—that is quite sad. If I don't speak of the equivalent challenges and waste of human potential among staff members, volunteers, and even those who stand above us with baton firmly in hand, it is only because I don't fully understand them.

So there is lots to do yet, even within the limits posed by the fundamental nature of the orchestra (not to mention human nature). But one more thing needs to be remembered if we are to be successful. Ken Pfaff, head of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, told the first-ever joint conference of the American Federation of Musicians' Player Conferences in 2000: "Union reform is not a sprint; it's a marathon." Institutional change, like playing an instrument, is a wonderful topic for daydreams. Making it happen, just like getting to Carnegie Hall, takes lots of time and lots of work, some of which will be far from enjoyable. Paul's personal commitment to the future of the Symphony Orchestra Institute

is the same message of endurance and commitment simply said in a different language.

But as systemic institutional change comes to our field, I believe few will be seen to have been more instrumental in making it happen than Paul Judy and the Institute that he created. With that in mind, before I actually hand over the Gold Baton to Paul and you all give him the applause he so richly deserves, I would ask you to consider a more concrete gesture of support and appreciation. I would suggest you visit the Institute's website, as I did a few months ago, and join the Advocates of Change. It's a small step for an orchestra manager or a board member or a musician. But, if enough of us do it, it will begin to look like a giant step for our field.

Congratulations, Paul, and thanks.

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*Paul R. Judy:*

My thanks, Robert for your thoughtful words and your long-time support of the Institute. And thanks, too, to Henry Fogel and the League board, as well as Chuck Olton and the League staff, for their roles in selecting me to receive this award. My thanks also go to Neil Williams and Cathy French for their early support of the Institute and to Fred Zenone for his long assistance, support, and succession in the work of the Institute.

I am very pleased, flattered, and humbled to receive this award! I do so on behalf of all symphony organization participants in America and Canada who are dedicated to healthier, more personally and professionally rewarding, more effective, and more sustainable symphony institutions.

You in this room—and all other attendees to this League conference—compose an important portion of that dedicated group. You are joined by many other symphony organization participants who are not with us today, especially many key board members and orchestra musicians. All together, we must find ways for symphony institutions—as total networks of employees and volunteers—to become more collaborative, more collegial, more inclusive, more robust, and more joyful.

The symphonic institution, as a central musical arts organization, is vital to the cultural development of its community. We must advance this cultural development. To do so, we must become advocates of organizational change, adaptation, and innovation. We must question and challenge many inherited and imbedded patterns of symphony organizational behavior, practices, policies, and structures which reduce our effectiveness and sap our strength. We must find fresh and invigorating alternatives.

We must find ways to unleash the enormous levels of intelligence, energy, and passion which exist in our symphony organizations. Organization development principles and methodologies to help in this process of change have already been created. We must study, understand, and then apply these insights to the wonders and complexities of the symphonic workplace and to the range of activities and community services which flow from it.

We can handle this challenge. We have the human capacity to change, individually and organizationally. Some organizations and participants are already in the process of doing so. Others are on the verge of action. Let's broaden and accelerate this progress! We can do it! Or, perhaps more directly, you can do it!

Once again, my very warmest thanks for this wonderful award!