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Frederick Zenone on the Integrated Organization



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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

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The following quotations are from the panel presentation by Frederick Zenone at the American Symphony Orchestra League national conference in Dallas, Texas, on June 17, 1981, as reported in “Orchestra Planners and Players: Harmony or Dissonance,” which appeared in the December 1981 issue of *Symphony Magazine*, beginning on page 20.

Inherent in our symphonic workplace is a direct conflict between individual needs and organizational demands. We have always taken the view that the conflict came as original sin. We have dealt with the problem by putting the burden of resolution on the individual and by describing the problem as the human condition of performance. If the value by which we are measured is the quality of music we produce, then a reasonable correlative has to be to provide an environment in which the music and the musician can continue to grow. Frustration, boredom and alienation lead to unintended and negative consequences for all.

. . . Essentially what is wrong is that, from the point of view of the orchestral musician, we do not have a professional career in our organizations; we have a job.

Our organizations will have to address the growth needs of the individual members and those changing needs as individuals pass through career stages. Musicians must be able to develop their own short-term and long-term goals within the organization, and those goals, in their multiplicity, must be encouraged and rewarded by the organization. Chamber music, study, recitals, teaching, direct continuing involvement in the decisions that affect the musical and economic policies of the organizations, or, at times, none of the

above but just excellence in orchestral playing, are areas that will not only be attractive to different people but will attract them at different times in their careers. We must do better than simply say, “Go right ahead, we won’t stand in your way.”

Can we change a symphony orchestra? Hardly. And who would want to? What we can do is integrate it into our symphonic organization in ways that permit the musicians to be more than artisans hired with their bag of notes for the duration of their working life.

Management, especially, will have to place more emphasis on interpersonal and emotional components of feedback. Management will have to make greater allowance for the ideas and feelings of others. It will have to be more willing to experiment and take risks with new ideas and values.

The musicians will have to be free to assume more responsibility. Some people, feeling threatened, won’t want to try at all. For others, there will be a painful transition period of reeducation and experiment. Once having experienced a new way with its intrinsic rewards, however, individuals will be miserable in the *traditional* types of organizations.

Such an integrated organization as a whole might not make people happy, but it would encourage fully functioning, developing people with real self-esteem, self responsibility, and the ability to develop their own goals and realize them in relation to the organization.