

*Harmony*TM

FORUM OF THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INSTITUTE
NUMBER 3 • OCTOBER 1996

Book Review

Beyond Tradition: Partnerships Among Orchestras, Schools, and Communities

by

Marilyn D. Scholl



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

www.soi.org

Book Reviews

Beyond Tradition: Partnerships Among Orchestras, Schools, and Communities

Beyond Tradition arrived in our offices as we were completing editorial work on Samuel Hope and Robert Freeman's manuscripts. Given both authors' concerns about the relationships between orchestral organizations and their communities, particularly in the area of music education, receipt of this document could not have been better timed.

David E. Myers of Georgia State University's School of Music received a 1995 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to research existing orchestra education partnerships and to derive principles that might be implemented to establish effective programs. Beyond Tradition reports the work of the project.

In collaboration with the project's research coordinator, Cynthia Thomas, Myers and his staff undertook a number of activities to identify partnerships currently in existence. The researchers worked with the American Symphony Orchestra League to develop a survey designed to identify each member orchestra's K-12 education programs and descriptions of unique features of those programs.

As a result of the preliminary work, nine orchestra education partnerships were selected for site visits. Much of Beyond Tradition is devoted to in-depth reports of the site visits, making for fascinating reading about a variety of approaches to music education which our nation's orchestras have implemented.

However, the real "meat" of the report begins on page 101, as the authors undertake their discussion of principles which can lead to effective orchestra education partnerships. A listing of strategies to strengthen the role of education in the orchestra's mission suggests:

- ◆ Include education in the mission statement, goals, and objectives of the orchestra.
- ◆ Build commitment to the educational mission among administrators, conductors, and musicians and report regularly to the larger community on the orchestra's education and outreach efforts.

- ◆ Make the education director a senior-level administrative appointment, with appropriate staff and budget.
- ◆ Commit to funding education as part of the ongoing operational budget requirements of the orchestra.
- ◆ Incorporate education considerations into hiring policies for administrative personnel and musicians and build education responsibilities into musicians' contracts.

In a concluding section, "Looking Ahead . . .," the authors leave us with the following thoughts:

Some orchestras have sought relevance for younger audiences by adopting an entertainment mentality, developing glitzy shows, or performing arrangements of popular music. . . . Relevance does not imply simplistic embracing of the most recent trend or fad . . . In fact, with careful planning, students' ears and minds are capable of being stretched well beyond the limits many adults tend to impose on them.

And, perhaps, more importantly:

If the orchestra's interest in education is primarily that of introducing school children to the orchestra with the hope of building future audiences, its efforts are probably for naught. There is no hard evidence to suggest that sizeable audiences or support will automatically accrue from such motivations. On the other hand, if the orchestra sees itself as helping to fulfill the human longing for aesthetic satisfaction and advancing the expressive capacities of the human mind and spirit, then its role becomes one of educating people to the wealth of life-enriching opportunities available through the symphonic music experience. . . . Partnerships between orchestras and schools thus become a crucial link in a lifetime of music education experiences that connect to serve the artistic and cultural well-being of entire communities.

Well said.

Beyond Tradition:

Partnerships Among Orchestras, Schools, and Communities

David E. Myers and Cynthia Thomas
National Endowment for the Arts, 1996.
128 pp.

Reviewed by Marilyn D. Scholl, editor of Harmony and president of Scholl Communications Incorporated