

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

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## From a Reader



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## From a Reader

*Since the publication of the first issue of Harmony, the Institute has invited response from readers. We received the following thoughts from Marsha Schweitzer, associate principal bassoon with the Honolulu Symphony and editor of Senza Sordino.* —Editor

**I**n *Harmony* Number 4, I read with interest the stories about the New Jersey Symphony. In the roundtable discussion, New Jersey music director Zdenek Macal was quoted as saying, “The past no longer exists. Forget about it. Go on to tomorrow. Stop talking about yesterday.”

I must respectfully disagree with Mr. Macal. Those who lived through the past must live with the effects of it every day. They can no more forget their past than they can forget their race or gender. It is natural for newcomers to an organization with a troubled past to want to start with a clean slate, but there may yet be value to that desperate scrawl written during an organization’s defining moments. Let us not be hasty in erasing it.

We are, all of us, individuals and organizations, the culmination and fruition of what we have been. Let us embrace the past, remember the pain, and learn from it. In the context of those painful memories our new successes will have deeper meaning and greater worth, and will stand a better chance for permanence. As Santayana admonishes us, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

### **Publisher’s Note:**

When symphony organizations writhe in turmoil and dysfunction, many participants quite often experience great anguish and emotional scars. Particularly affected are those who feel very deeply about their institutions, be they musicians, staff members, or volunteers. As suggested by this reader, and as supported by modern organizational theory, history should be used as a learning tool to help all parties improve current thinking and behavior. But the process for doing so must follow a model of reconciliation, and not one of “position taking.” It is also salutary to use fresh symbols, images, and metaphors that are unencumbered by historical association (see Paul Boulian’s thoughts on page 40). In addition, participants in organizations pursuing new ways of working together must develop a “shared vision” which looks forward, not backward.