

*Harmony*TM

FORUM OF THE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INSTITUTE

NUMBER 2 • APRIL 1996

Publisher's Notes

by

Paul R. Judy



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

Publisher's Notes

The first issue of *Harmony*, published in October, 1995, introduced the Institute's direction and initiated a contemporary discussion of issues relating to the effectiveness of symphony orchestra organizations. This volume presents a variety of insights and opinions on a number of related organizational topics as perceived by a range of thoughtful observers of and participants in these institutions. We hope the content will provoke a growing and formative debate on central organizational problems and opportunities and will flush out even more written expression for future issues of *Harmony*.

Some five years ago, Harvard Professor **J. Richard Hackman** and his associates initiated a research project directed to better understanding the group behavior of symphony orchestras as organizations. The feature section of this issue begins with an interview with Professor Hackman during which he not only summarizes key findings of this research, but also adds fresh, new observations. We thank Professor Hackman for his long-standing interest in symphony organizations and for his early and continuing support of the Institute.

The next feature, "Why They Aren't Smiling: Stress and Discontent in the Orchestral Workplace," is coauthored by the father/son duet of **Seymour and Robert Levine**. Each has had a long interest in the stress which symphony orchestra musicians experience, and they put forth cogent views as to the nature and principal reasons for such stress. As a practicing musician and editor of *Senza Sordino*, the newsletter of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, Robert Levine is no stranger to bow or pen. We were pleased that the coauthors were willing to expand on a speech that Robert gave some years back.

Starting on page 27, Case Western Reserve University Professor **Everette J. Freeman** comprehensively outlines the need for much greater knowledge about the social and work contract between musicians and their employers—the symphony orchestra associations—a topic traditionally described as "labor relations." As noted in Professor Freeman's article, some feel that the use of this phrase in and of itself throws a pall over positive change in these intraorganizational relationships. Freeman presents the key questions around which this organizational research might be shaped and poses a newly enunciated organizational theory as a possibly valuable paradigm for such research.

Marin Alsop is a rising figure in the field of conducting and music direction, a field still heavily dominated by men, even though the proportion of women among symphony orchestra musicians is clearly growing. We were very pleased

when Alsop agreed to be interviewed by a fellow Denverite, psychologist **Barbara Pollack**. Alsop's interview responses give us a special glimpse into the interpersonal aspects of being a music director operating within the unique organizational structure of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, where an Artistic Committee, composed primarily of orchestra players, has the decision-making authority usually reserved for the music director.

One objective of *Harmony* is to republish previously expressed views about symphony orchestra organizations, when those views have special merit and enduring value. We initiate this plan with "Pure Gold: The Fleischmann–Lipman–Morris Debate of 1987–89." For many readers, this summary will provide first-time exposure to what was said in the course of this fascinating coast-to-coast public discussion. Even for those who are familiar with this exchange, the review should be stimulating, particularly since two participants, **Ernest Fleischmann** and **Thomas W. Morris**, have provided updates about their ideas.

To initiate more inquiry into the economics of symphony orchestra organizations, and particularly their potential for greater productivity, we start with the succinct views of a "star." Perhaps no scholar in the field of cultural economics is more famous than **William J. Baumol**. At Princeton University in the 1960s, he teamed up with fellow professor William G. Bowen (later president of Princeton and now president of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) to illuminate the fundamental economic challenge of symphony orchestra organizations—the inability to achieve improvements in the productivity of classical music performance—and the implications thereof. Professor Baumol and others have subsequently identified ways those organizations have mitigated the effects of "Baumol's cost disease" and we hope more about these matters will be said in future issues of *Harmony*.

During recent months, we have come across two forward-looking books which especially relate to issues within symphony orchestra organizations. We thank **John P. Schneider**, Chairperson of the Grand Rapids Symphony, for his excellent review of a book recently published by The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management. *The Leader of the Future* is a collection of 31 essays by some of the nation's most prominent thinkers and authors on the topic of leadership. I had the pleasure to review our second selection, *Organizing for the Future: The New Logic for Managing Complex Organizations*, a book emanating from research conducted by The Center for Effective Organizations at the University of Southern California. This book is also a compendium of essays, each written by faculty members of one of the nation's leading academic centers researching "high involvement organizations" in the commercial sector. Both books are highly recommended to anyone interested in improving the effectiveness of symphony orchestra organizations.

Even if you have successfully identified the score fragment on the cover of *Harmony*, have you deciphered the relationship of this work and its composer

with the development of the symphony orchestra institution in America? On page 70, **Phillip Huscher** unlocks this mystery and once again entertains us with an interesting slice of musical and organizational history.

A key mission of the Institute is to foster research into symphony orchestra organizations, including the economics of these institutions. The Institute recently awarded its first Doctoral Research Fellowships to John Breda and Arthur Brooks, as described more fully on page 42. It is a happy coincidence that this prospective research relates rather directly to matters discussed in this issue of *Harmony*!

On page 78, you will find the first of what we hope will be a regular extension of the excellent bibliography about symphony orchestra organizations which appeared as part of Erin Lehman's essay in the initial issue of *Harmony*.

We have been delighted with your response to the Institute's establishment and to the inaugural issue of *Harmony*. A selection of comments from readers appears in the pages which follow. We hope this issue will provoke others to send along their personal comments and opinions.

And if you have the urge to be more comprehensive, please read the Guidelines for Contributors for information about how to submit a manuscript. We also mention there some key topics in which the Institute has a special publication interest. Many of you have talked with us about these topics; writing for *Harmony* gives you the opportunity to share your thoughts more broadly.

For those pressed for time, we invite you to take a minute, after reading *Harmony*, to complete and mail the reader response card which you will find in the middle of this issue.

Last but not least, we welcome and need your support symbolized by a supporting organizational, affiliated, or direct individual or group subscription to the Institute's publications. We say "symbolized" because the funds involved in the Institute's subscription revenue will probably never provide much more than the distribution costs of its publications in reaching all those persons who can bring about organizational change within symphony orchestra institutions. But your moral support lends significance to our endeavor and it means that the publications are valued and being read. Subscriber forms are available at the back of this issue.

May we have your support?