

**Enduring Crisis, Ensuring Survival: Artistry, Economics,
and the American Symphony Orchestra**

By

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Dedication

To all of the musicians, administrators, and listeners who consider themselves a part of
the global orchestra community.

Acknowledgements

As is so often the case, this dissertation reflects the hard work of not one but many, constituting a support structure made up of more people than I can acknowledge here. What follows is an abbreviated list, with apologies to anyone that I've left out. It has been particularly rewarding to work with my committee members, each of whom has facilitated my progress and enhanced my thinking about the issues addressed herein. Mark Clague served as more than just a chair; he was both a sounding board and a collaborator, and is largely responsible for my continued interest in and research of American orchestras. Over the last four years, we have worked together on more projects that I care to count, and I consider myself fortunate to call him a mentor, colleague, and friend. Chuck Garrett played an essential role in bringing this dissertation to life, providing timely comments and suggesting remedies for problems that I was too immersed to see myself. Jane Fulcher's enthusiasm and inquisitive spirit helped to ground the study in mainstream musicological discourse, while the alternative perspectives furnished by Michael Jensen and Henry Fogel pushed me to make more provocative conclusions.

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ABSTRACT

Enduring Crisis, Ensuring Survival: Artistry Economics, and the American Symphony Orchestra

By

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Chair: Mark Allan Clague

Long considered one of the western world's cultural treasures, the symphony orchestra's artistic significance belies an institutional history replete with unsolved paradoxes. Since at least 1900, the classical performing arts have struggled to reconcile artistic creation with economic and cultural sustainability. This tension is rooted in a variety of management models that employ distinct ownership structures, revenue streams, and artistic ideologies. Along with various other factors, these models have played a decisive though often ignored role in determining artistic practices and audience reception, especially in America. My dissertation argues that the organizational structure employed by orchestras since the late-nineteenth century is fundamental to understanding the challenges they face today. Drawing from the domains of historical musicology and organizational theory, this project uses the analytic lens of structure—including governance arrangements, financial systems, social hierarchies, institutional logics, and artistic initiatives—to explain the orchestra's turbulent yet resilient history.

Chapter 1 develops a *framework* to demonstrate how structure has influenced orchestral culture and performance practice. Several early operating models are introduced and compared to the corporate structure adopted by twentieth-century American orchestras. Chapter 2 explores the New York Philharmonic's evolution from a musician-owned-and-managed cooperative to a board-governed nonprofit, a transition shaped by the ideals—and wallets—of a new philanthropic elite. Chapter 3 scrutinizes the Louisville Orchestra New Music Project (1948–58), which supported over one hundred world premieres and inspired a shift in how orchestras foster the creation of contemporary music. Chapter 4 examines the development of a global youth orchestra movement, El Sistema, whose recent transplantation to the U.S. highlights a conflict between traditional definitions of artistic excellence, commercial viability, and social change. The dissertation concludes by synthesizing these strains of evidence and positing some solutions for the orchestra's contemporary challenges, connecting past and present to uncover new perspectives on high art music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Chapter One

Untangling the Symphony Orchestra: An Organizational Perspective

Introduction: A History of Decline, or Business as Usual?

In the spring of 1987, Ernest Fleischmann was invited to deliver a commencement address to graduates of the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM). As executive director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic since 1969, Fleischmann was well known both for his visionary leadership and hard-nosed business acumen. Yet while the trustees of CIM were surely aware of Fleischmann's reputation for being uncompromising and opinionated, they could not have anticipated the controversy his address would spark. After being introduced by the director of the conservatory, Fleischmann began his speech: "It's [been] more than twenty years since Pierre Boulez started a revolution in the opera world with his stern but subtle call to action. Today I want you to know that it's high time to set fire to the symphony orchestra."¹

Fleischmann's address, subsequently published as "The Orchestra is Dead, Long Live the Community of Musicians," has become the stuff of legend, but the crux of his argument—that orchestra concerts had become dull, predictable, and overly expensive, and musicians increasingly bitter and disinterested—rang true for many industry insiders. And while this was not the first time that the artistic, economic, and organizational challenges facing orchestras had been discussed, the intensity of the ensuing debate

¹ Ernest Fleischmann, "The Orchestra is Dead, Long Live the Community of Musicians," transcript of commencement address to the Cleveland Institute of Music, 16 May 1987 (available for download at <http://www.acso.org/>).

suggests the industry had approached a boiling point. Fleischmann's most vocal critic was Samuel Lipman, co-founder of the literary and culture magazine *New Criterion* and a staunch supporter of the orchestral status quo. He, along with Fleischmann and Cleveland Orchestra executive director Tom Morris, was invited to take part in a public symposium dedicated to the future of the symphony orchestra in 1989. Although their opinions differed as to what the future might look like, they ultimately agreed on one point: "the symphony orchestra is very much alive, ... but [this] does not mean that its present condition is either healthy or happy."²

Discussions concerning diagnosis of the orchestra's "condition" and possible remedies has continued, unabated, for much of the last century, spanning time and place and defying uniform explanation. Despite a lack of consensus, the various solutions put forward are worth unpacking further. Fleischmann's proposal involved a larger and more flexible "community of musicians," not unlike the El Sistema movement that was simultaneously flourishing in Venezuela and would later be adapted in the U.S. and other countries.³ Morris insisted that "new and enlightened leadership" was the only way to successfully navigate the difficult times that lay ahead. Allegations regarding management's inability to navigate the tension between artistic sophistication and fiscal solvency would soon develop into a popular rallying cry for musicians, who grew increasingly frustrated with the precarious state of orchestral institutions in general.

² Quoting Samuel Lipman, in "Pure Gold: The Fleischmann–Lipman–Morris Debate of 1987–89," *Harmony: Forum of the Symphony Orchestra Institute* 2 (April 1996), 60.

³ This topic is addressed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. Pierre Boulez anticipates Fleischmann's suggestion in a 1970 essay, stating "I believe that our aim should be polymorphous groupings: within the larger group formed by the orchestra we should make it possible to tackle all the different repertoires. . . . This would restore to the orchestra—which would in fact be a cooperative of performers—its sociological function, because it would include all the different sectors and in addition provide a certain mobility, an ability to move about" (Pierre Boulez, "Orchestras, Concert Halls, Repertory, Audiences," *Orientalisms: Collected Writings*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 467).

For senior arts consultant Thomas Wolf, however, such concerns skirted a more fundamental issue. In 1992, Wolf was hired by the American Symphony Orchestra League (since 2007 known as the League of American Orchestras, or simply the League) to research the origins of the orchestra's economic struggles. His findings were troubling. Wolf projected that, by 2002, the aggregate debt of American orchestras would grow to \$64 million; to escape certain financial collapse, the field must enact a "serious paradigm shift" by increasing productivity, cutting artistic costs, and bucking "Baumol's Curse"—a reference to the analysis of Princeton economist William Baumol, who along with William Bowen exposed the structural paradox of live orchestral performance.⁴ Published in 1966, their research provides a stark explanation of why orchestras and other performing arts organizations struggle to earn enough revenue to cover expenses.⁵ The authors claim that, unlike most manufacturing and service industries, arts organizations suffer from inherently stagnant productivity. No matter the technological advances, the number of musicians and time it takes to perform a Beethoven symphony has remained more or less unchanged since the nineteenth century. This productivity gap, they argue, is the crux of an irreversible structural deficiency that has no obvious remedy.⁶

We will return to Baumol's Curse later in this chapter, but as it turns out, Wolf was wrong. In lieu of the anticipated \$64 million deficit, the League reported an industry-wide surplus of \$85 million in 2002, suggesting that the problem was solved and a new paradigm had been achieved. Yet this was of course not the case. The number of

⁴ Douglas J. Dempster, "The Wolf Report and Baumol's Curse: The Economic Health of American Symphony Orchestras in the 1990s and Beyond," *Harmony* 15 (October 2002), 1–22.

⁵ William Baumol and William Bowen, *Performing Arts—the Economic Dilemma* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966).

⁶ Several orchestras, including the Berlin and Los Angeles Philharmonic, have recently experimented with digital streaming technology as a means of reaching new audiences and erasing the productivity gap inherent to live orchestral performance. See chapter 5 for more discussion regarding these developments.

orchestral concerts and the salaries of orchestral musicians grew at unprecedented rates, thanks to increased levels of giving by individuals, corporations, and foundations. The productivity lag highlighted by Baumol and Wolf remained in place, however, as the revenue generated from ticket sales covered an increasingly smaller portion of mounting artistic and production costs. Thus the orchestra only appeared to have bucked the curse, experiencing growth during boom periods in the national economy but ultimately unable to match its ever-rising cost structure with gains in ticket sales or audience demand.

Fast forward to 2011, and the tension between financial stability and artistic excellence on the orchestral stage is as palpable as ever. After the so-called “Great Recession” (beginning in 2007) took a firm hold of the global economy, businesses and for-profit institutions once accustomed to hefty profits were faced with unprecedented financial losses. Not surprisingly, nonprofit performing arts organizations faced an even grimmer reality. Nevertheless they continued to exceed expectations, overcoming a flawed business model to produce and disseminate art of the highest quality. The struggles that orchestras face are particularly acute, due to the large cache of musicians and administrative staff needed to produce and present concerts. In 2007–08, for instance, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association boasted 101 musicians, 140 full-time staff, and a budget of over \$50 million.⁷ To cover such enormous costs, orchestra boards and development directors have had to appeal to wealthy donors, lest ticket sales miraculously cover a higher proportion of the total budget. While many arts organizations might be producing more art at a higher quality than ever before, their means of bringing

⁷ As stated in Mark Clague, “Building the American Symphony Orchestra: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of a Twentieth-Century Institution,” in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by John Spitzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). The number of staff listed here (140) includes those dedicated to the upkeep and operation of Orchestra Hall, such as box office staff, janitors, security guards, stagehands, and rental managers.

that art to the public and defining its cultural value is lacking—a deficiency that highlights the gap between popular audiences and classical music.⁸

To be sure, the economic dilemma confronting orchestras today has been the subject of much attention and research from within the industry, having been addressed most recently by economist Robert Flanagan in a comprehensive report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, one of the nation’s largest arts funders.⁹ Flanagan’s analysis highlights trends in the economic health of orchestras between 1987 and 2008 in an attempt to find a “smoking gun” that explains the perennial shortfalls orchestras face. Flanagan’s study provides a rich assessment of the problems facing the orchestra, positing that the disproportionate growth of musician salaries and the revenue structure of orchestras in general are unsustainable and incongruent with the contemporary funding environment. Music critics in American and abroad have joined the fray, writing extensively on the plight of classical music while asking some difficult but important questions.¹⁰ Why should public or private funds be directed toward struggling orchestras and opera companies when the populations they’ve historically served are, in a word, elite?

Indeed, this question has confronted major American orchestras since their earliest founding—in New York (1842), Boston (1881), and Chicago (1890). The economics of live performance proved incapable of covering their costs long ago, and the

⁸ A lower percentage of the general population attended symphonic concerts in 2008 than in 1980 (National Endowment for the Arts, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, Research Report No. 49 (November 2009)).

⁹ Robert J. Flanagan, *Report to Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: The Economic Environment of American Symphony Orchestras* (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, March 2008) <<http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/packages/pdf/Flanagan.pdf>>.

¹⁰ See Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music?: Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1997) and Greg Sandow, “The Arts Need Better Arguments,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 February 2009, D7.

constant struggle artists and institutions face is of very real consequence to the art they produce. In 1951, historian John Mueller quipped that “the American symphony orchestra, like the genius in the garret, has almost always led a precarious hand-to-mouth existence,”¹¹ and eighteen years later *Time Magazine* chronicled the ongoing struggles of America’s most prestigious ensembles, suggesting that these challenges are not new but are instead rooted in the structure of both the institution and its audience.¹² Today orchestras in Philadelphia, Louisville, and Detroit are fighting to balance their already depleted budgets through capital campaigns, contract renegotiations, and bankruptcy proceedings.¹³ These conflicts have worried orchestral donors and incited broader debates concerning the value of the arts on Capitol Hill, where some federal legislators have formalized plans to cease financing the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities altogether.¹⁴ The death knell for orchestras, it seems, has been ringing for decades, only growing louder as the financial strains under which they operate become more pronounced. Just as Ernest Fleischmann remarked nearly 25 years ago, the future of the orchestra—at least in its traditional guise—remains in doubt.

Yet no real consensus has been reached when defining the orchestra’s problems and offering up possible solutions. Is lackluster funding and public support to blame, or, as some would have us believe, is it a mixture of mismanagement and corporate greed that has landed the orchestra in hot water? Is Baumol’s Curse at the center of this

¹¹ John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1951), 328.

¹² “American Orchestras: The Sound of Trouble,” *Time Magazine*, 13 June 1969.

¹³ The particular challenges faced by these orchestras are discussed in chapter 5, but see Daniel J. Wakin, “Philadelphia Orchestra’s Ticket Sales Add to Woes,” *The New York Times*, 9 February 2010; Elizabeth Kramer, “Louisville Orchestra Woes Repeat Nationwide Refrain,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, 26 January 2010; Daniel J. Wakin, “A Strike Looms at Leonard Slatkin’s Detroit Symphony,” *The New York Times*, 3 October 2010.

¹⁴ “Conservative Republicans Propose Eliminating Arts and Culture Funding,” *The Huffington Post*, 21 January 2011 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/21/conservative-republicans_n_812415.html>.

longstanding imbroglio, or is it an unmitigated reality that orchestra administrators must work around? Surely it is a bit of all of these. In a January 2011 article published in *USA Today* and reprinted widely, president of the League of American Orchestras Jesse Rosen opined that “several cities’ orchestras are struggling financially, not from some broad national trend but from primarily local forces,” suggesting that industry-wide fears concerning economic sustainability were unfounded.¹⁵ That same month, president and CEO of the Kennedy Center Michael Kaiser (dubbed “The Turnaround King” for his success in improving struggling performing arts organization) conceded that the problem was national in scope, but insisted that orchestras “have not built the fundraising bases they need to support themselves. They’ve relied too much on earned income, and when earned income goes away, they’re in trouble.”¹⁶

These statements offer some explanation regarding the industry’s apparent decline, but they do not adequately justify the cycle of crisis it regularly confronts. In my dissertation, I argue that the organizational structures and strategies employed by symphony orchestras since the late–nineteenth century are critical to understanding the challenges they face today. As outlined above, the classical performing arts have long struggled to reconcile definitions of excellence with traditional measurements of success, financial or otherwise. This unresolved tension is rooted in a variety of management models that employ distinct ownership structures, revenue streams, and artistic ideologies. Along with various other factors, these models have played a decisive though

¹⁵ Quoted in Tim Evans, “Orchestras Struggle to Play On,” *USA Today*, 16 January 2011.

¹⁶ Quoted in Kramer, “Louisville Orchestra Woes Repeat Nationwide Refrain.” Kaiser expounds on the problems facing orchestras in a February blog post for *The Huffington Post*, listing an oversupply of concerts, declining demand, inflexible fixed costs, the death of the recording industry, and the end of the subscription-based ticketing model (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-kaiser/the-orchestra-conundrum_b_819434.html?ref=fb&src=sp).

often ignored role in determining artistic practice. In the chapters that follow, I investigate partial histories of the New York Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, and El Sistema to establish links between organizational structure, commercial viability, and artistic output—including prevailing programming trends, compositional styles, performance practices, and public reception.

Scholars have only recently argued that the way in which orchestras are organized shapes cultural production, and while most of these contributions have come from outside the humanities, musicology is uniquely situated to offer new insights on the topic.¹⁷ The interconnectedness between organizational structure and artistic practice can be traced throughout the orchestra's history, substantiating a repeating narrative of inevitable crisis and unlikely survival. The concept of "organizational structure" is intentionally broad and will be used here as a lens through which to analyze the orchestra's institutional history and artistic choices. In the chapters that follow, it subsumes several interrelated phenomena, including financial structures, social interactions, symbolic systems of meaning, modes of cultural production, and business or management models.¹⁸ These different models impact the day-to-day operations of an orchestra and reflect the values and divisions of power present in the community they serve. Although the boundaries between these categories were in practice quite flexible, the corporate nonprofit model became the structure of choice for American orchestras around 1900. Over the course of the next hundred years, a process of deliberate professionalization led to the further

¹⁷ See Stephen R. Couch, "Patronage and Organizational Structure in Symphony Orchestras in London and New York," in *Performers and Performances: The Social Organization of Artistic Work*, edited by Jack B. Kamerman and Rosanne Martorella (New York: Praeger, 1983), 109–22.

¹⁸ For an example of how cultural production and organizational structure are inextricably linked, see Mark Clague, "The Industrial Evolution of the Arts: Chicago's Auditorium Building (1889-) as Cultural Machine," *The Opera Quarterly* 22, no. 3-4 (Summer-Autumn 2006): 477-511.

entrenchment of this model and the ritual of orchestral performance in general. This process and its consequences serve as the locus of my dissertation, which unites artistic and economic trends to uncover new perspectives on high art music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Below, I construct a framework so that we might better understand the organizational structure adopted by most performing arts nonprofits in America. In addition to a synthesis of extant scholarship from the fields of musicology, cultural history, sociology, economics, and organizational theory, I will investigate some of the earlier operating models used for presenting orchestral music, including cooperative, entrepreneurial, and autocratic systems that were retired in favor of the now-ubiquitous nonprofit model. Connecting this shift with distinct artistic strategies and cultural norms that took root in the early twentieth century helps to explain why the orchestra as an organization continues to behave the way it does. Indeed, such an interdisciplinary and varied approach is necessary to describe as complex an institution as the symphony orchestra. My goal here is to bring these viewpoints together to provide a more coherent and historically informed understanding of the orchestra since 1900.

Although the continued survival of the symphony orchestra may be in doubt, a close reading of its history suggests that crisis is as much a part of the orchestra's institutional DNA as are Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. Implementing widespread change in the face of continual crisis is a difficult task, indeed. When Pierre Boulez was music director of the New York Philharmonic, he broached the topic with characteristic clarity: "Try ... simply as a matter of organization, to modify the constitution of an orchestra. You will see that you will almost certainly encounter deep hostility, from both public and

players.”¹⁹ The reasons for this hostility are complex and will be addressed later on in this and other chapters, but one could argue that the division stems from the distinct and often opposing agendas of orchestra managers, musicians, and patrons. Without consensus as to what makes an orchestra “successful” (i.e. a larger-than average budget, famous conductor, new concert hall, impressive ticket sales, adventurous programming, international press coverage, artistic quality, or audience recognition), it is difficult to move toward an objective and mutually defined goal for improvement.

Nevertheless, members of the broader orchestra community—musicians, administrators, funders, audience members, and even musicologists—are engaged in an ongoing transformation process, navigating new modes of performance that challenge traditional organizational processes and relationships. Over the past two years, the League of American Orchestras has organized conferences around themes such as “The New Reality” and “Orchestra Revolution.” Yet revolution implies disruptive transformation, and neither the League nor other constituents vested in the orchestra’s future have proposed a suitable alternative. In a recent editorial for a union publication, Christopher Durham (Director of Orchestral Services, American Federation of Musicians) argues that promoting drastic change as a solution to crisis is unrealistic and destructive.²⁰ In his words, “this is a different world, but it is still a world for Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms.... We must preserve and promote the performance of great music. We must not be led down the path of mediocrity disguised as the future. We must

¹⁹ Pierre Boulez, “Where Are We Now,” in *Orientalisms: Collected Writings*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 449–50.

²⁰ Christopher Durham, “Quality Leadership is Essential in Difficult Times,” *International Musician* (August 2010).

be managed effectively so that we are able to perform great music and are rewarded for our artistry.”

Propaganda aside, Durham’s statement is an important one: orchestral music deserves a place in our society. Yet to create a hospitable environment for great art, the organizational scaffolding that serves to rehearse and disseminate it must allow for, or even insist upon, effective engagement with potential consumers. Take for an example the Really Terrible Orchestra, founded in 1995 by British businessman Peter Stevenson. The amateur ensemble has toured successfully and made a healthy profit, despite promoting an artistic product that is self-admittedly terrible. One could certainly argue that the group is no more than a circus act, exploiting the perverse curiosities of uninformed listeners; but if success is measured by financial gain and engagement with modern audiences, the Really Terrible Orchestra has been arguably more successful than some of the world’s top professional ensembles.²¹ In the words of the sociologist and amateur pianist Howard Becker,

Changes in art occur through changes in worlds. Innovations last when participants make them the basis of a new mode of cooperation, or incorporate change into their ongoing cooperative activities.... But their success depends on the degree to which their proponents can mobilize the support of others. Ideas and visions are important, but their success and permanence rest on organization, not on their intrinsic worth.²²

While Becker refers here to the organization of art, I take his insight as a point of departure for my own work, which explores the art of organization and its reverberations in and around the concert hall. The orchestra’s environment—its “world”—is constantly

²¹ Other precedents exist for groups like The Really Terrible Orchestra, including the Portsmouth Sinfonia, which was founded in 1970 and led by British composer Gavin Bryars. Both ensembles represent more than parody through tongue-and-cheek performance, however; as we will see, they serve to highlight relevant cultural issues surrounding entertainment, politics, and community.

²² Howard Becker, *Art Worlds: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982 and 2008), 309–10.

changing, and the time is ripe for these organizations to reengage their communities and enact substantive change. I hope that what follows holds value for scholars and practitioners alike, and begins to shed some light on the orchestra and its vibrant history.

Cultural Politics and the Liability of Being Elite

While the research presented in my dissertation is primarily concerned with an institution and repertoire rooted in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe, the U.S. has played a critically important role in its history. To be sure, many of the composers and compositions discussed are firmly entrenched in other national traditions, but America's historical affinity toward orchestral culture has been well documented.²³ This fascination with public ensemble performance parallels the more recent trend to write about American music history by way of its performers, patrons, and institutions, versus composers and their masterworks. Richard Crawford has been perhaps the most vocal proponent of this methodology, but others, including Joseph Horowitz and Mark Clague, have noted the disparity between "traditional" western music historiography and the American musical landscape.²⁴ And, although any discourse concerning music and nationalism is wrought with tension, the disconnect between the classical canon and an American musical identity has directed some attention away from art music when discussing this country's musical contributions.²⁵ This tension, however, is turned on its

²³ See Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra* and Philip Hart, *Orpheus in the New World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973).

²⁴ Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005); Mark Clague, "Chicago Counterpoint: The Auditorium Theater Building and the Civic Imagination," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2002.

²⁵ See, for example, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

head if one considers the symphony orchestra developed its current form and function in America first, despite its reliance on a primarily inherited, Euro-centric repertoire.

Many monograph-length studies devoted to specific symphonic ensembles exist, but previous research on the orchestra in general, both in America and abroad, is limited and out of date. Work done by John and Kate Mueller (1951, 1973), Henry Swoboda (1967), George Seltzer (1975), Howard Taubman (1970), Philip Hart (1973), and Jack Kamerman (1983) comprises a significant portion of the research regarding the orchestra as a cultural institution.²⁶ My interpretation is informed most directly by Mueller and Hart, whose research on programming trends, orchestra financing, and audience taste has been particularly influential. Both authors recognize an unavoidable issue when discussing the twentieth-century orchestra and its role in society: cultural elitism. Although the orchestra has at times been described as an institution devoted to the “education of the masses,” its artistic viability is rooted in the support of an elite subculture. As explained in more detail below, the beginnings of the modern orchestra as an institution have more to do with wealthy donors seeking respite from the growing middle and working classes than with the education of the general public. Hart ends his book with an eloquent defense of elitism, suggesting that great art is by its very nature aristocratic, and thus must maintain its ties to elite culture to survive. Despite the polemical nature of Hart’s argument, there is little doubt that issues of taste are intertwined with class. In his work with management scholar Michael Useem, cultural

²⁶J.H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra*; Kate Hevner Mueller, *Twenty-Seven Major American Symphony Orchestras: A History and Analysis of their Repertoires, Seasons 1842-43 through 1969-70* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973); Henry Swoboda, ed., *The American Symphony Orchestra* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1967); George Seltzer, *The Professional Symphony Orchestra In the United States* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1975); Howard Taubman, *The Symphony Orchestra Abroad* (Vienna, VA: 1970); Philip Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*; Jack B. Kamerman and Rosanne Martorella, *Performers and Performances: The Social Organization of Artistic Work* (New York: Praeger, 1983).

sociologist Paul DiMaggio confirms that the connection between social classes and arts consumption is deeply entrenched, suggesting that attempts to broaden appeal for classical music are doomed to fail if the class connotations associated with symphonic culture are not erased.²⁷

The tension between the orchestra's elitist underpinnings and its desire to reach a broader public has been continuously present throughout much of the last century, and has only worsened as the ideological and aesthetic distance between symphonic music and popular culture widens. Leon Botstein points out that, while today's elite are just as wealthy and philanthropic as past generations, they simply do not care about classical music: "The patron class is philistine; instead of Andrew Carnegie, we have Donald Trump. Some rich guy with a hedge fund wants to be photographed with Angelina Jolie, not support the Cleveland Orchestra."²⁸ Conductor James Conlon considers this phenomenon an "American paradox," insisting that in the face of tremendous artistic growth and vibrancy, audiences have stagnated, or worse, disappeared.²⁹ The fact that symphonic culture is appreciated to a greater degree in Europe than in the U.S. should come as no surprise given the sense of collective ownership European audiences feel toward the canonical repertoire and its creators.³⁰ Yet while the European public has

²⁷ Paul DiMaggio and Michael Useem, "Social Class and Arts Consumption: The Origins and Consequences of Class Differences in Exposure to the Arts in America," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Mar., 1978), 141–61, and "Cultural Democracy in a Period of Cultural Expansion: The Social Consumption of Arts Audiences in the United States," *Social Problems* 26, No. 2 (Dec., 1978), 179–97.

²⁸ As quoted by Heather Mac Donald in "Classical Music's New Golden Age," *City Journal* 20, no. 3 (Summer 2010) <http://www.city-journal.org/2010/20_3_urb-classical-music.html>.

²⁹ *Ibid.* According to the National Endowment for the Arts, the number of Americans participating in and attending the arts has continually decreased since 1982, although this decrease may in part be explained or at least tempered by drastic decreases in attendance at all leisure activities, including sports (National Endowment for the Arts, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, Research Report No. 49 [November 2009]).

³⁰ Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" is a helpful way of thinking about how and why orchestral culture is deemed valuable by the European public (Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in J.

historically valued the classical arts more explicitly than in America, the development of the modern concert ritual and its insulation from common social practice has produced challenges for orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic.

Although several scholars from within music studies have devoted their work to the orchestra and its relationship to these cultural developments, much pertinent research comes from outside the musicological community.³¹ The notion of cultural hierarchy, explicated by historian Lawrence Levine in his book *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, has been an important marker of American life since the nineteenth century, and played a significant role in the development of modernized orchestral culture.³² As early as the 1830s, American culture fractured into distinct subgroups that in many cases opposed and competed with one another—a phenomenon that reflected the rise of the middle class and spurred the formation of many art institutions. John Spitzer unpacks these cultural shifts in his recent work on nineteenth-century entrepreneur orchestras, which were slowly replaced by permanent institutions subsidized by a new class of wealthy elites.³³ This schism between high art and popular culture continues to resonate today. In a 2010 lecture for the Royal Philharmonic Society, Alex Ross pointed out that, “In America, especially, members of the upper and middle classes embraced the symphony orchestra

Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–58).

³¹ For an overview of recent research on the orchestra, see Joan Peyser, ed., *The Orchestra: A Collection of 23 Essays on its Origins and Transformations* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2006) and John Boyden, “Old Practices, New Ideals: The Symphony Orchestra in the Modern World,” in *Reviving the Muse: Essays on Music after Modernism*, ed. by Peter Davison (Brinkworth: Claridge, 2001). For a more broad review of organizational and sociological literature dealing with the orchestra, see Erin V. Lehman, “Symphony Orchestra Organizations: Development of the Literature since 1960,” *Harmony* 1 (1995): 37–54.

³² Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). It is worth noting that several musicologists have subsequently picked up this strain of research, including Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

³³ John Spitzer, “The Entrepreneur-conductors and their Orchestras,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 5, no. 1 (2008), 22.

as a faux-European bastion in a world of vulgar commerce.... The orchestra became the pride of the upper crust and the chief beneficiary of its largesse.”³⁴ So although some scholars have pointed out the limitations of Levine’s overly simplistic highbrow-lowbrow paradigm, it is an important construct to bear in mind. Orchestras and other purveyors of the classical arts have spent much of the twentieth century grappling with an elitist perception as they work to reengage a broader audience—a struggle made all the more tenuous by the structural and ideological barriers they face.³⁵

The conflict outlined above has had very real implications when one considers the orchestra’s cultural history and its relationship to the mass public. In Boston, the split between high and low led to the formation of two artistic brands within one institution—the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO, since 1881) and the Boston Pops (founded 1885). Although these ensembles are jointly managed and governed, they perform distinct styles of music and serve arguably different functions: transcendence versus entertainment. In her dissertation, Ayden Adler examines the unique relationship between the BSO and the Pops, suggesting that the division between the two groups pervades not only repertoire choices but aesthetic ideologies and commercial objectives.³⁶ Nevertheless, the split between the two groups is born out of necessity: the Pops needs the BSO for high-art legitimacy, and the BSO depends on the Pops for its broad audience base and financial success.³⁷

³⁴ Alex Ross, “Hold Your Applause: Inventing and Reinventing the Classical Concert,” lecture transcript from the Royal Philharmonic Society, 8 March 2010.

³⁵ See Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: an Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), along with Michael Long, *Beautiful Monsters: Imagining the Classic in Musical Media* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

³⁶ Ayden Adler, ““Classical Music for People Who Hate Classical Music:” Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops, 1930–1950,” Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 2007.

³⁷ Moreover, the Pops depend in part on the Esplanade Orchestra, with its cheaper per service freelance musicians, for supplementary income.

This dance enacted between orchestra, audience, and economic forces has compelled these institutions to navigate the pressures of artistic integrity on the one hand and popular acceptance on the other, leading to what J. Peter Burkholder has called a “historicist mainstream” in twentieth-century compositional practice.³⁸ The historical nature of classical culture is especially palpable in the context of the modern orchestra, which Burkholder casts as an antiquated museum dedicated to masterworks from the past.³⁹ Although his assessment resonates with the conservative realities of contemporary orchestral programming, it foregoes the nuances and unprecedented diversity present in contemporary musical discourse. Such aesthetic diversity, driven simultaneously by various political and cultural movements that unfolded over the course of the last hundred years, has been well documented by Glenn Watkins, Richard Taruskin, Jane Fulcher, and others. In the penultimate volume of his *Oxford History of Western Music*, Taruskin invokes the term “maximization” to describe the trajectory of the twentieth century, contending that many of the stylistic choices made by composers can be heard as an exaggerated extension of—as opposed to a sharp break from—high Romanticism.⁴⁰ In the context of interwar France, Fulcher has used the tools of cultural history to explore developments in music, art, literature, and politics that cannot be understood fully without both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, constructing a truly

³⁸ J. Peter Burkholder, “Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music for the Last Hundred Years,” *The Journal of Musicology* 2, no. 2 (Spring, 1983), 115–34. For a discussion concerning the formative role of popular success on compositional style, see John Rockwell, “The Return of Tonality, The Orchestral Audience & The Danger Of Success: David Del Tredici,” in *All American Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 71–83.

³⁹ J. Peter Burkholder, “The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as Museum,” in *The Orchestra: A Collection of 23 Essays on its Origins and Transformations*, edited by Joan Peyser (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2006), 410.

⁴⁰ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Late 20th Century*, vol. 5 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

interdisciplinary lens to unpack the complex and multifarious story surrounding twentieth-century music and life.⁴¹

To be sure, the cultural power afforded to western art music can be understood as the result of an ongoing ritualization process that has helped orchestral culture overcome its own marginality by endowing certain practices with pseudo-sacred status. Some of the most distinctive characteristics of orchestral performance—including musician dress and concert etiquette—have gradually become part of a set of ritual behaviors, where participants “use the language of gesture to affirm, to explore and to celebrate their ideas of how the relationships of the cosmos operate, and thus of how they themselves should relate to it and to one another.”⁴² Yet this ritual, enacted in concert halls for more than a century, has become foreign and even off-putting for many. The cultural schism discussed above generated a variety of etiquette-related hoops through which concertgoers continue to jump, despite efforts to reverse these trends by orchestra administrators. Applauding at the right time is a signal of sophistication and nuanced understanding of musical expression; silence during performances demonstrates how seriously listeners internalize the musical experience. According to Christopher Small, “there [is] something in the nature of works of the classical concert repertory that makes the acts of performing and listening to them under any circumstances go counter to the way I believe human relationships should be.”⁴³ As we will see, this curtain between ensemble and audience was not constructed arbitrarily, but is instead an integral component of the orchestra’s contemporary organizational identity.

⁴¹ Jane Fulcher, *The Composer As Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴² Christopher Small, *Musiking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 220.

Early Orchestra Operating Models

Just as the organizational structure associated with today's orchestras began to take shape around the turn of the twentieth century, so too did the modern-day concert ritual. While the antiquated nature of contemporary concert practice suggests an homage to some distant and mythical past, its antecedents are in fact far more recent. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, concerts were considered social events, providing a space for friends and neighbors to meet and discuss current events over food and drink. To be clear, early concert performances held more weight than purely social or background music, but they were certainly not the serious or even stodgy affairs familiar to us today. This ritual, constructed in the latter part of the nineteenth century and reinforced by authoritative conductors and obedient audiences ever since, has been shaped as much by class politics as it has by the sublime aesthetic imputed onto the music of Beethoven and Wagner.⁴⁴ By the 1880s, upper-middle class and wealthy elites had begun to stake claim to the classical music tradition, building barriers that for the most part dissuaded initiates from taking part in the concert experience.

For these barriers to become fully ensconced, however, the power and responsibility previously held by musicians had to be acquired by a new philanthropic elite. In short, a new operating model was needed: one that empowered non-musicians to make organizational decisions while requiring them to shoulder the increasing costs associated with ensemble performance. Before this shift, orchestras in America were organized as cooperative enterprises, communal associations, or even for-profit firms.

⁴⁴ For more on the aesthetic associated with nineteenth-century instrumental music and its cultural and political agenda, see Mark Evan Bonds, "Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, No. 2/3 (Summer – Autumn, 1997): 387–420 and Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Although these earlier models were known to have existed, they have only recently received explicit attention by musicologists.⁴⁵ Mark Clague posits six organizational models that proliferated nineteenth-century orchestral life, including the club, cooperative, entrepreneurial, conservatory, society, and corporate nonprofit models.⁴⁶ Each of these structures exhibited a unique combination of leadership (volunteer, shared, leader, director, board), musician make-up (amateur, student, professional), economic base (membership fees, tuition, ticket revenue, donations), and ownership (members, leader, corporation). The link between these structures and distinct modes of patronage is one worth recognizing. In Mueller's orchestral history, he cites no fewer than seven methods of institutional patronage, including cooperative support, plutocratic support by one or more guarantors, private enterprise, endowment income, broad support from small donations (known as a "maintenance fund"), and public subsidies.⁴⁷ Below, I briefly explicate the cooperative, entrepreneur, and autocratic models as they were practiced by various nineteenth century orchestras, devoting special attention to how and why each operating scheme capitulated to the now-dominant nonprofit structure in the first decades of the twentieth century.

As early as 1842, the New York Philharmonic, billed as "America's first orchestra," began presenting concerts—the same year that the Vienna Philharmonic was founded. Both groups were musician-owned-and-operated, an operating model presumably inspired by the Philharmonic Society of London (known since 1913 as the

⁴⁵ For non-musicological treatments of early orchestra operating models, see Stephen R. Couch, "Patronage and Organizational Structure in Symphony Orchestras in London and New York" and Adam Galinsky and Erin V. Lehman, "Emergence, Divergence, Convergence: Three Models of Symphony Orchestras at the Crossroads," *European Journal of Cultural Policy* 2 (1995), 117–39.

⁴⁶ Mark Clague, "Building the American Symphony Orchestra."

⁴⁷ J.H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra*.

Royal Philharmonic Society, not to be confused with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, est. 1946). Arguably the first orchestra to be organized as a cooperative, the Philharmonic Society of London was founded in early 1813 and gave its first concert on March 8 of that year. For the first century of its existence, the orchestra produced six to eight concerts annually, performing first for a small entourage of local musicians and then for an increasingly large circle of patrons.⁴⁸

London's first symphony orchestra was a truly collaborative institution, both on the stage and off. Until Louis Spohr's appointment in 1820, the group was conducted from within the ensemble, either by the concertmaster or the harpsichordist, and seating was rotated on a regular basis. Performing musicians—called “Members”—were elected from a larger pool of 150 “Associates,” all of whom were required to display some degree of musical proficiency. Non-musicians, known as “Fellows,” were permitted to attend rehearsals and concerts, provided they pay an annual subscription fee of three guineas. Members and Associates had to pay this subscription fee as well, and while performing musicians were paid for their services, “no member or associate [received] any emolument from the funds, all money received being appropriated only to the public purposes of the Society.”⁴⁹ In other words, musicians and patrons alike were treated as equal collaborators or investors, sharing in any profits or losses recognized by the Society. This tenet of shared ownership often meant that musicians went unpaid for weeks on end, resulting in a phenomenon known as the “Deputy system,” where musicians could choose to forgo a contracted engagement with little or no notice, provided they send a suitable substitute. Other orchestras soon adopted this precedent,

⁴⁸ Myles Birket Foster, *The History of The Philharmonic Society of London* (New York and London: The John Lane Co., 1912).

⁴⁹ As stated in the Society's bylaws, listed in *Ibid*.

resulting in sporadic rehearsal attendance and unenviable performance quality until musicians were hired and treated as permanent employees—a development that was not achieved in London until 1932.

The birth of the Philharmonic Society of New York (known colloquially as the New York Philharmonic) was surely influenced by what was happening in London. Violinist Urelli Corelli Hill, considered the founder of the New York ensemble, spent several years in England and continental Europe, having presumably encountered London's orchestra during his travels. When the New York Philharmonic presented its first concert on 7 December 1842, its leadership structure closely mirrored that of London, operating as a self-governed cooperative that split available dividends at the conclusion of each season. While the Philharmonic maintained its collaborative structure until 1909, strong-willed maestros and wealthy patrons began to assert more and more influence on the orchestra's day-to-day operations. After a long stint with Carl Bergmann as conductor and a disastrous year with Leopold Damrosch at the helm (1876–77), German émigré and future orchestra builder Theodore Thomas was elected to lead the Philharmonic.⁵⁰ Damrosch would go on to found the New York Symphony Society (est. 1878), while Thomas' tenure with the Philharmonic resulted in an unprecedented artistic renaissance.⁵¹ Yet it was short lived; by the first decade of the twentieth century, the orchestra had become the laughing stock of newer but more accomplished orchestras in

⁵⁰ Thomas was unofficially offered the Philharmonic post in 1876, but he refused to cut his own orchestra's New York concerts, a condition that the Philharmonic's board would not agree to. The Philharmonic hired Damrosch instead, whose failures forced the board to reconsider Thomas' request and hire him for the following season (Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography*, 74)

⁵¹ During Damrosch's year as conductor, the Philharmonic posted \$841 in total receipts, compared to more than \$15,500 in Thomas' last season as music director (1890–91) (Ibid., 151).

both New York and Boston. In a way, the group's capitulation to patron intervention was inevitable:

The Philharmonic in its part-time, cooperative form could not maintain its eminent position as the leader of orchestral performance in New York. In 1911, wealthy patrons offered to greatly increase the number of Philharmonic concerts, and to pay for Philharmonic deficits, in return for control of the organization of the orchestra. The offer was accepted.... The cooperative was dead, with organizational power being put in the hands of the board of directors.⁵²

The reorganization hinted at above unfolded slowly and unevenly, and will be subjected to a detailed analysis in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Yet the New York Philharmonic was not alone in its quest to reorganize and acquire professional legitimacy through philanthropic donations. Moving from a collaborative to a corporate operating model meant a stark shift in power, favoring donors over musicians. Not surprisingly, this change paralleled the rise of artist unions and incited an ideological conflict between musicians and management that continues today. Theodore Thomas (1835–1905) was perhaps the only contemporary figure who partially transcended this infighting, gaining the admiration (and fear) of the musicians he employed and the administrators he later worked for. With his stalwart demeanor and unwavering artistic vision, Thomas played a significant role in saturating much of the eastern and Midwestern U.S. with orchestral music. In addition to his tenure in New York, Thomas' legacy runs through Cincinnati, Chicago, and a host of other cities and towns, large and small. Although he was born in Germany, he became an adopted authority on orchestral music, legitimizing symphonic culture as an important part of the American experience. Indeed, for Thomas, "the symphony orchestra was not an end in

⁵² Couch, "Patronage and Organizational Structure in Symphony Orchestras in London and New York," 114.

itself, but the medium for communicating to the audience the uplifting moral message of great music.”⁵³

In many ways, Thomas’ career can be seen as a microcosm of the orchestra’s institutional development. Imported from Europe, he became a well-known violinist in and around New York, gaining admittance to the cooperative Philharmonic on 21 January 1954, at the age of 19.⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter he began a second career as a chamber musician, leading a successful concert series with pianist William Mason. His true calling, however, was conducting, due not so much to his grasp of the repertoire (he focused mostly on Beethoven, and programmed little contemporary music) but instead a paternalistic sense of what musicians and audiences needed in the way of a cultural diet. His conducting career began with the Brooklyn Philharmonic Society. In his own words,

In 1862 I concluded to devote my energies to the cultivation of the public taste for instrumental music. Our chamber concerts had created a spasmodic interest ... and our performances had reached a high standard. As a concert violinist, I was at that time popular, and played much. But what this country needed most of all to make it musical was a good orchestra. The [Brooklyn] Philharmonic Society, with a body of about sixty players and give yearly subscription concerts, was the only organized orchestra [doing so].⁵⁵

Thomas continued to conduct concerts in Brooklyn until 1891, but it did not take long for him to branch out and form his own orchestra in 1862. He had a clear model in the entrepreneur-conductor Louis Antoine Jullien, with whom he had performed as a violinist on his tour of the United States in 1852–53. The gesticulating French conductor could not have been more different than Thomas: emotional and visually dynamic to his deliberate and reserved presence on the podium. Their programming philosophies stood

⁵³ Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*, 10.

⁵⁴ Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

in stark contrast as well, with Thomas refusing to mix serious (usually German) symphonic music with the lighter, more popular works that Jullien had become known for. As we will see, however, Thomas and Jullien did have one very important thing in common: the drive to build the world's greatest orchestra.

As early as 1864, Thomas was leading an ensemble of his own design in a series of Symphony Soirees produced in New York. Many of the musicians he hired also performed with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and more than half had emigrated from Germany, echoing a trend of influence in not only repertoire but performance practice following the Revolution of 1848. By the fall of 1869, Thomas had secured enough musical talent and audience interest to embark on a tour with his Theodore Thomas Orchestra, a group that would tour throughout the U.S. until 1888, quickly becoming the envy of orchestras everywhere and acquiring the moniker "Thomas's Machine." Even in Chicago and New York, where he would soon be invited to lead the Philharmonic, Thomas' orchestra was unrivaled. Just as Jullien had done twenty years earlier, Thomas had become a successful entrepreneur-conductor. By hiring the best musicians available and building relationships with audiences and venues across the country, he produced concerts that held both artistic and economic value. And unlike the collaborative ensembles discussed above, the Thomas Orchestra was a commercial venture, with any profits or losses shouldered by Thomas alone.⁵⁶

In spite of his orchestra's ability to stay in the black, Thomas was not always so fortunate in his personal and artistic investments. In addition to touring the "Thomas Highway" and conducting both the New York and Brooklyn Philharmonics, Thomas was recruited to be music director of the Philadelphia Centennial (1876), the Cincinnati

⁵⁶ Spitzer, "The Entrepreneur-Conductors," 3–24.

College of Music (1878–80), and the American Opera Company (1885–87). Each of these short-lived projects nearly bankrupted Thomas, whose artistic pursuits were not nearly as profitable as his professional status suggests. In Philadelphia, he underestimated the unwieldy performing forces (over two thousand singers and instrumentalists) and cacophonous performance venues, taking on huge personal debts that resulted in the sale of his invaluable music library. Fortunately, the library was purchased by longtime Thomas supporter Franz Zinzer, who promptly returned the contents to its original owner. Two years later, Thomas was selected by a group of backers to lead the newly founded Cincinnati College of Music. He had enjoyed a long and prosperous relationship with the city, where he was instrumental in founding the biannual May Festivals (est. 1873) and had helped build a new 3,600-seat concert hall. In his new post, however, Thomas struggled to mediate artistic and economic concerns, refusing to compromise his artistic integrity to appease the school's financial backers. By 1880, the conservatory had folded, leaving Thomas with diminished confidence and a depleted bank account.

After returning from Cincinnati, Thomas maintained a grueling conducting and touring schedule until Jeanette Thurber approached him to direct her fledgling American Opera Company. Thurber, a wealthy patron of the arts who would later become famous for bringing Dvořák to America, had already dedicated several years to the project, which was devoted to bringing English-language opera to new audiences in and around New York. Thomas accepted her offer without hesitation, believing wholeheartedly in the continued cultural education of the American public. Like his ill-fated experiences in Philadelphia and Cincinnati, however, Thomas's involvement lasted less than two years. For a third time, he had failed to separate fact from fiction in the context of funding and

audience support, concentrating on his own artistic vision at the expense of all other considerations. In an 1888 address to his touring orchestra, he lamented that “to retain a permanent orchestra there is apparently only one thing we can do, and that is to travel during the whole year.”⁵⁷ Thomas and his musicians, many of whom had families in New York, agreed that this was not a viable strategy to pursue. Despite his undisputed position atop the orchestra world, Thomas had come no closer to founding the permanent orchestra he so desperately wanted. For the first time in over two decades, the orchestra did not go on tour, leaving the conductor to contemplate the future of the American orchestra and his role in shaping it.

Half way across the country, businessman Charles Norman Fay had an answer to Thomas’ previously unanswerable questions. Fay had long admired Thomas, and wanted to bring both him and his orchestra to Chicago. In 1890, with \$153,000 in local pledges guaranteed over three years, Fay founded the Chicago Orchestral Association—the nation’s first symphonic organization to be formally incorporated.⁵⁸ Created independently from any one individual, the Orchestral Association set a precedent by laying the democratic groundwork necessary to perpetuate symphonic culture beyond the leadership or support of a single conductor or donor. With risk spread across a large number of guarantors and financial decisions vetted by a board of experienced businessmen and their wives, the orchestra quickly built a reputation for artistic excellence and organizational stability. Within a year, Thomas had moved to the Midwest, marrying Fay’s sister Rose and presenting regular concerts with an orchestra

⁵⁷ Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography*, 98.

⁵⁸ The Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented its first concerts in 1891, but as Mark Clague correctly points out, the Orchestral Association was incorporated by the State of Illinois in 1890 (Clague, “Building the American Symphony Orchestra: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of a Twentieth-Century Institution”).

consisting of many of the musicians he had worked with in New York. By 1904, composer Richard Strauss remarked that the orchestra “far surpassed my expectations.... I can say to you that I am delighted to know an orchestra of artists in whom beauty of tone, technical perfection, and discipline are found in the highest degree.”⁵⁹

To be sure, Thomas’ orchestra—known first as the Chicago Orchestra and later the Chicago Symphony Orchestra—had grown into one of the city’s finest civic institutions, prompting the conductor to reject job offers from both the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1892) and New York Philharmonic (for a third time, in 1894) to stay in Chicago. In 1904, he witnessed the completion of his crowned jewel: Orchestra Hall, a concert venue designed by architect Daniel Burnham and built specifically for Thomas and the CSO. When he died a month later, the trustees of the Orchestral Association renamed the ensemble the Theodore Thomas Orchestra, in honor of its illustrious conductor. Yet as a civic institution designed for public benefit and consumption, the orchestra’s legacy was intended to reach far beyond Thomas or Fay, revealing new organizational objectives that starkly differed from earlier cooperative or entrepreneur models. With this in mind, in 1912 the trustees settled on “The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, founded by Theodore Thomas”—a befitting label considering Thomas’ enduring legacy.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Strauss was in Chicago to hear the orchestra perform his tone poem, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (quoted in Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*, 37).

⁶⁰ According to biographer and historian Philo Otis, the CSO’s board of directors approved the name “Theodore Thomas Orchestra” on 11 April 1905, only to change it to “The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, founded by Theodore Thomas” in 1912, in part because Thomas’ name was discouraging donations from those who had no connection with the music director (see Philo Adams Otis, *The Chicago Symphony Orchestra: Its Organization Growth and Development, 1891–1924* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 250).

If there was one ensemble that matched Chicago's artistry, and one man that equaled Thomas's steadfast devotion to symphonic music, it was the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Major Henry Lee Higginson. Founded in 1881, the BSO may in fact have served as a model for Thomas and the CSO. The orchestra was well disciplined, gave concerts of serious symphonic music throughout the winter season, and garnered enough support to warrant a new hall. Unlike in Chicago, however, the BSO was organized as an autocracy, owned and operated not by a corporation but by a single individual.⁶¹ Higginson, who had inherited and multiplied his fortune as a banker, acted as a benevolent dictator, personally underwriting the orchestra's annual \$20,000 deficit and overseeing all artistic and business decisions for more than thirty-five years.⁶² It was clear from the very beginning who was in charge, when on 20 March 1881 Higginson breathed life into the orchestra by placing an announcement in the local newspapers:

**THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA:
IN THE INTEREST OF GOOD MUSIC**

Notwithstanding the development of musical taste in Boston, we have never yet possessed a full and permanent orchestra, offering the best music at low prices, such as may be found in all the large European cities, or even in the smaller musical centres of Germany. The essential condition of such orchestras is their stability, whereas ours are necessarily shifting and uncertain, because we are dependent upon musicians whose work and time are largely pledged elsewhere.

To obviate this difficulty the following plan is offered. It is an effort made simply in the interest of good music, and though individual inasmuch as it is independent of societies or clubs, it is in no way antagonistic to any previously existing musical organization. Indeed, the first step as well as the natural impulse in announcing a new musical project, is to thank those who had have brought us where we now stand. Whatever may be done in the future, to the Handel and Haydn Society and to the Harvard Musical Association, we all owe the greater part of our home education in music of

⁶¹ The BSO incorporated on 7 May 1918, the same month that Higginson resigned his post as president.

⁶² As stated in Joseph Horowitz, "Henry Higginson: High Culture, High Finance, and Useful Citizenship," in *Moral Fire* (unpublished manuscript, by permission of author).

a high character. Can we forget either how admirably their work has been supplemented by the taste and critical judgment of Mr. John S. Dwight, or by the artists who have identified themselves with the same cause in Boston? These have been our teachers. We build on foundations they have laid. Such details of this scheme as concern the public are stated below. The orchestra is to number sixty selected musicians; their time, so far as required for careful training and for a given number of concerts, to be engaged in advance.

Mr. Georg Henschel will be the conductor for the coming season. The concerts will be twenty in number, given in the Music Hall on Saturday evenings, from the middle of October to the middle of March. The price of season tickets, with reserved seats, for the whole series of evening concerts will be either \$10 or \$5, according to position. Single tickets, with reserved seats, will be seventy-five cents or twenty-five cents, according to position.

Besides the concerts, there will be a public rehearsal on one afternoon of every week, with single tickets at twenty-five cents, and no reserved seats. The intention is that this orchestra shall be made permanent here, and shall be called "The Boston Symphony Orchestra."

Both as the condition and result of success the sympathy of the public is asked.

H. L. Higginson

Shortly after the orchestra's first season had ended, Higginson took the unprecedented step of prohibiting musicians from working for other music ensembles, guaranteeing gainful employment for the entire winter season and establishing the country's first orchestra devoted solely to concert performance.⁶³ By the turn of the twentieth century, a summer pops season had been added, and the BSO "had become a national standard-bearer for civic culture.... [inspiring] the creation of important orchestras in Cincinnati, Chicago, and Philadelphia, and a dramatic expansion of the New York Philharmonic."⁶⁴

When Higginson resigned his post on 14 May 1918, the orchestra assumed a corporate

⁶³ To attract the best musicians, Higginson allowed members of his orchestra to perform with one other local ensemble, at least at first: the Handel and Haydn Society (Ibid.).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

model, transferring ownership to a volunteer board made up of a growing number of guarantors. Nevertheless, the conservative legacy of Boston's "foremost citizen"⁶⁵ continued to shape the organization and the relationship it cultivated between musicians and management; in 1942, the BSO became the country's last major orchestra to unionize.

Clearly, American audiences were inundated with more and better performances of orchestral music in the second half of the nineteenth century than ever before, sparked first by traveling ensembles such as the Germania, Jullien, and Thomas orchestras and later by the New York Philharmonic and Boston and Chicago Symphony Orchestras. By 1900, entrepreneur and collaborative leadership had been replaced by the corporate nonprofit in Chicago, Cincinnati (1894–95), and Philadelphia (1900).⁶⁶ Symphonic music had officially overtaken opera as America's musical pastime. Unlike in Europe, where ensembles benefited from the rise of state capitalism and government subsidy, American orchestras turned to wealthy patrons for support, starting a new chapter in their history that continues to present day. Although the origins of support differed across continents, both methods of subvention carried structural, cultural, and artistic consequences that were often at odds with the tastes and expectations of the general public.⁶⁷ Theodore Thomas' oft-cited mantra—that "the symphony orchestra shows the culture of its

⁶⁵ Quoting longtime BSO historian Mark A. DeWolfe Howe, in Richard P. Stebbins, *The Making of Symphony Hall, Boston* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 2000), 12.

⁶⁶ The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra lists its founding year as 1880, but it acted primarily as a choral society until 1907 (Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra*). The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra became the second ensemble to take on a corporate operating model, thanks in large part to a group of fifteen women that formed the groups' first board of directors. Future First Lady Mrs. William Howard Taft served as the orchestra's founding president, sparking a trend of female involvement in orchestral management and fundraising (*Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra: A Tribute to Max Rudolf and Highlights of Its History* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Association, 1967)).

⁶⁷ For more on how government subventions influenced artistic practice in Europe, see Leslie Sprout, *Music for a "New Era": Composers and National Identity in France, 1936–1946*. Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2000.

community”—would soon seem incongruous, raising important questions regarding the value of institutional permanence in the face of an ever-changing cultural environment.

An Orchestral Golden Age

As the cooperative, entrepreneur, and autocratic orchestras that pervaded nineteenth-century American musical life gave rise to board-governed, nonprofit institutions, the ways in which symphonic culture was produced and perceived began to change. The term “nonprofit” as we understand it today is a coinage of the 1960s, and refers to an organizational form that does not distribute profits to owners or shareholders, but instead reinvests them to help the organization in question pursue a charitable or social mission. The nonprofit’s early history can be traced to pre-Revolutionary America, where colonists took it upon themselves to meet certain responsibilities that in Europe had historically been assigned to the state.⁶⁸ By the turn of the twentieth century, nonprofit organizations of all types began to appear in industries where the government failed to provide adequate services and for-profit firms could not turn a profit. With the advent of the 501(c)3 designation (1954), which excused groups from paying federal income tax and allowed philanthropists to write off their donations, these organizations implemented complex governance and funding structures that are still in place today. Unlike their for-profit counterparts, nonprofits—including orchestras, opera companies, and most presenting organizations—remain tied to a social mission that supersedes, and often conflicts with, a financial bottom line. Certain high-ranking members of each

⁶⁸ For more on the genesis and evolution of the nonprofit sector, see David C. Hammack, “Introduction: Growth, Transformation, and Quiet Revolution in the Nonprofit Sector Over Two Centuries,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30 (2001), 157–73; Hammack, “Nonprofit Organizations in American History,” *The American Behavioral Scientist* 6, no. 11 (2002), 1638–74; and Robert Bremner, *American Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

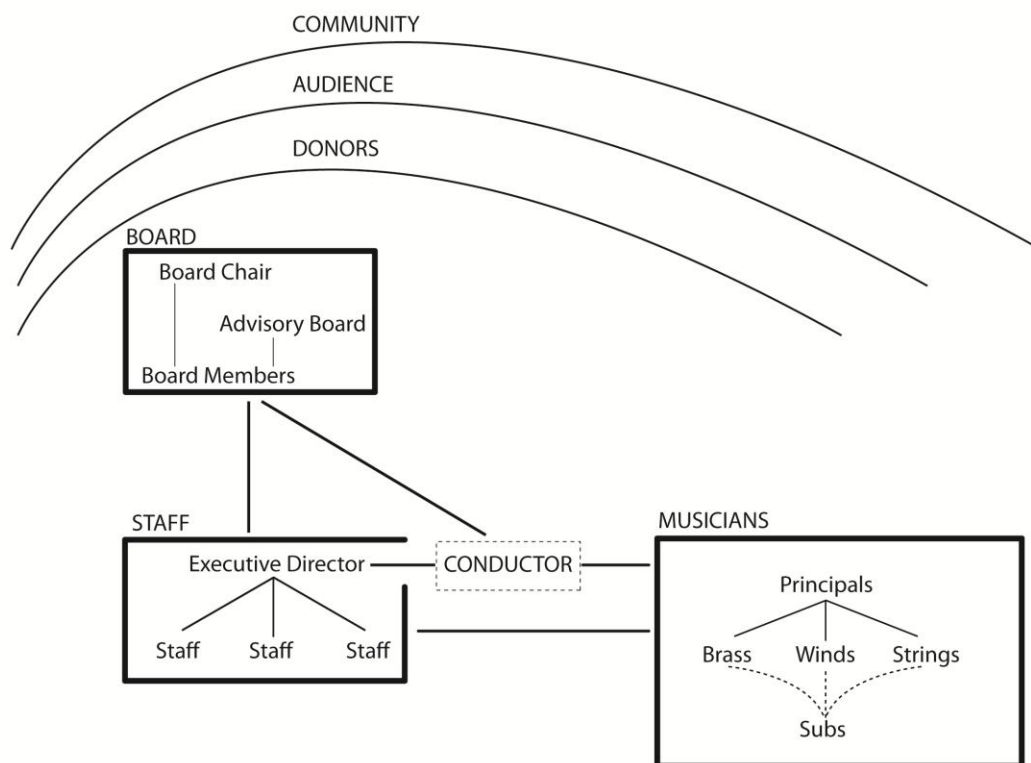
nonprofit corporation (usually donors) elect an unpaid board of directors, which acts as the organization's official governing body and is charged with keeping watch over its mission and staff.

As early as the 1850s, orchestras began to explore alternative patronage models as a means of ensuring survival in the newly industrialized Western world. Just as the nobility and clergy had served as the primary financiers of artistic work in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nonprofits provided musicians with new channels of support while granting status to a class of cultural philanthropists. From a historical perspective, the corporate nonprofit structure emerged as a solution to shifting environmental demands. Musicians and administrators have continued to use the nonprofit model as a tool to cultivate private and institutional donations, gradually professionalizing the field by advocating for full season contracts and higher wages. This turn toward a more sustainable model did not occur over night, but instead took decades. Rather than relying on a network of personal ties, symphony orchestras now functioned as bureaucratically structured organizations that required professional management by trained administrators.⁶⁹ The result was an even more complex organizational structure that featured an integrated "triple hierarchy," led by a board chair (board of directors),

⁶⁹ Stephen Couch interprets the orchestra's ongoing formalization not as a process of professionalization, but instead as the proletarianization of labor: "At the end of the 1950s, in many important respects, the professional symphony orchestra can be seen as being a musical factory. Run by a wealthy lay board of directors, employing bureaucratic management, hiring musicians who were tightly controlled in the workplace and had no say in the running of the organization, the orchestra turned out a standardized product over which the musicians had no control beyond the performance of their individual parts.... While musicians tended to consider themselves gifted professional artists, an examination of their actual working conditions shows them to have been much more akin to the conditions of factory laborers than to the conditions in which professionals work. The process was not one of professionalization, but rather one which shows marked resemblance to the proletarianization of factory labor" (Stephen R. Couch, "The Orchestra as Factory: Interrelationships of Occupational Change, Social Structure and Music Style," in *Art and Society: Readings in the Sociology of the Arts*, edited by Arnold W. Foster and Judith R. Blau (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 299).

executive director (staff), and conductor (musicians; see Figure 1.1 for a graphical representation of this structure). The maturation of this model was crucial to legitimizing the orchestra field, leading to a twentieth-century golden age in which nearly every city housed a symphony orchestra and listeners from around the world could enjoy performances through radio broadcasts and commercial recordings. The consequences of these developments, both artistic and financial, have been far reaching and, as we shall see, not always positive.⁷⁰

Figure 1.1 The Corporate Nonprofit Orchestra Model



⁷⁰ For an exposition of the orchestra's bureaucratization and its impact on the standardization of repertory, see *Edward Arian, Bach, Beethoven, and Bureaucracy: The Case of the Philadelphia Orchestra* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1971).

In 1942, a handful of representatives from twenty-three regional orchestras met in Chicago to discuss how they might mediate these increasingly complex power structures, starting what would become the American Symphony Orchestra League and confirming the existence of an extensive network of volunteer and professional orchestras across the country. Founded by an experienced board member and manager from Kalamazoo, Michigan named Leta Snow, the League began as a professional organization that provided artistic, financial, and organizational support for smaller metropolitan and civic orchestras. In 1950, Helen M. Thompson was named Executive Secretary and quickly increased the scope and reputation of the League, inviting the country's largest orchestras to become member organizations while advocating for higher wages, longer seasons, and more substantial government and community support.⁷¹ To be sure, the League has played a fundamental role in institutionalizing orchestral culture in America. But its policies and practices might also be seen as a reflection of the grassroots movement so conspicuous in the early part of the orchestra's American history: fostered by a small group of wealthy women, developed among regional orchestras across the country, and marked by an ever-growing divide between professional managers and musicians.

Today the League includes nearly 1000 member organizations, as it continues to play a critical role in shaping the American orchestra, both on the stage and behind the scenes. In addition to hosting an annual convention, it offers seminars for orchestra leaders, sponsors yearlong fellowships in orchestra management, and publishes up-to-date industry statistics and research on a variety of subjects.⁷² Yet, for all of the League's

⁷¹ Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*, 120–36.

⁷² Along with its bimonthly magazine *Symphony*, the League has published several research-driven case studies, including *Principles of orchestra management* (1985), *Policies and Procedures of Orchestra Governing Boards* (1991), *Americanizing the American orchestra* (1993), and *Fearless Journeys* (2010).

contributions to symphonic culture, scholars have yet to interrogate its role in combating—and in some cases propagating—the perennial challenges associated with live orchestral performance. As early as 1972, Philip Hart admitted publicly that the League does little more than “maintain the status quo,” but recent events suggest that it has also failed to foster a critically reflexive environment.⁷³ Henry Fogel, who served as CEO of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1985–2003) before being appointed president of the League (2003–2008), wrote prophetically that “those who question the actual ethic of [the orchestra’s] structure might not be the best people to govern the institution. Those who choose to be a part of the governing body should accept ... the structure that history has handed them.”⁷⁴ For fear of the unknown, administrators and musicians are uncomfortable questioning their organizations’ operating model and the basic assumptions that motivate it, choosing instead to “stay the course” and avoid disruptive change.

To fully professionalize the field, the League had to advocate for increased funding from not only individual donors but also foundations and government agencies. Although revenue from ticket sales continued to increase throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, these gains did little to cover the explosive growth experienced by the orchestra industry. Without hope of substantial government subsidy, their only

The League also releases annual reports containing industry statistics (since 1946) and repertoire trends (since 1988).

⁷³ One possible reason for this inaction might stem from the League’s financial dependence on orchestras’ membership dues, which make up a considerable portion of the League’s annual budget. Given this relationship, one would presume that the League benefits from not challenging existing management practices too strongly, lest it risk crucial financial support.

⁷⁴ Henry Fogel, “When Bad Things Happen to Good Orchestras,” *Symphony Magazine* (April–May 1988), 24.

recourse was to raise the money by means of private donation.⁷⁵ In fact, the tenets of nonprofit subsidy are rooted in a longstanding history of cultural patronage that pervaded nineteenth-century Europe and influenced the emergence of an American leisure class. In his recent book on philanthropic culture, historian Thomas Adam shows how different subsets of wealthy Europeans came to America and formed their own cultural institutions.⁷⁶ Although some middle-class patrons supported the arts, their contributions paled in comparison to the massive endowments and bequests created by this new social and economic elite.⁷⁷ Women would soon become important players in philanthropic circles as well, providing them cultural and political power that they had not otherwise attained.

By the early 1960s, private contributions covered between thirty and fifty percent of most orchestras' annual expenses.⁷⁸ And, while the twenty-five largest orchestras reached over 500,000 consumers each year through subscription concerts and education initiatives, the average annual salary for musicians in these organizations during the 1965-66 season was only \$11,600.⁷⁹ Even the largest regional ensembles paid their players less than \$2,000 a year, making orchestra musicians "one of the most underpaid

⁷⁵ The only precedent for substantial public arts funding in the U.S. is the Federal Music Project (FMP), which was founded in 1935 as part of the Works Progress Administration's Federal One Project series. Under the leadership of Nikolai Sokoloff, former Director of the Cleveland Orchestra, the Project dispensed tens of millions of dollars into the American music scene, provided jobs to out of work musicians, and "lifted the country's musical IQ" through a steady diet of classical warhorses and audience-pleasers (Nick Taylor, *American-Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work* (New York: Bantam Books, 2008), 286).

⁷⁶ Thomas Adam, *Buying Respectability: Philanthropy and Urban Society in Transnational Perspective, 1840s to 1930s* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁷⁷ Adam points out the German distinction between *Spenden* (to donate a small amount) and *Stiften*—the creation of foundations and endowments in an attempt to cement a legacy for their class and their families (Ibid).

⁷⁸ "The Ford Foundation: Millions for Music – Music for Millions," *Music Educators Journal* 53, no. 1 (Sep., 1966), 83–86.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

professional groups in American society.”⁸⁰ Two major milestones in large-scale support for the performing arts attempted to change this. The inception of the National Endowment for the Arts (1965) and the Ford Foundation Orchestra Grants Program (1966) brought hundreds of millions of dollars earmarked specifically for symphony orchestras, which in turn were expected to match these funds with their own capital campaigns. The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM) was founded at nearly the same time (1962), giving orchestral musicians a voice within the broader union environment. As a subsidiary of the American Federation of Musicians, ICSOM empowered orchestral musicians to negotiate contracts on their own behalf. Not coincidentally, orchestra work stoppages reached an all-time high during this period, forcing managers to find more money and thus promoting industry growth through new and larger contracts for musicians.⁸¹ These concurrent forces had an immediate impact, allowing large orchestras to present 52-week seasons and pay their musicians a competitive full-time wage for the first time.⁸²

The ultimate goal of these funding initiatives was not only to make orchestras sustainable, but also to “bring more and better music to more people.”⁸³ While demand in the form of paying audiences stagnated, the supply of professional musicians looking for work skyrocketed. Government and foundation granting agencies such as Ford stressed the continued professionalization of symphony musicians and administrators, ultimately

⁸⁰ \$2,000 in 1965 equates to less than \$14,000 in 2011 dollars (courtesy of the Bureau of Investigation).

⁸¹ Thanks to Henry Fogel for this insight.

⁸² According to Samuel Schwarz, “although the Ford Symphony Program was not announced until 6 July 1966, there was a long planning stage during which period it became known to the orchestras and players that such a program was in the planning. Hence, the salary increases in the preceding two years were arranged with the expectation of funding” (Samuel Schwarz, “The Economics of the Performing Arts: A Case Study of the Major Orchestras,” in *Performers and Performances: The Social Organization of Artistic Work*, ed. by Jack B. Kamerman and Rosanne Martorella (New York: Praeger, 1983), 275).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 85.

leading to a surplus of talent, unsustainable wage increases, and an oversupply of traditional concerts. According to the NEA, the number of professional orchestras in the U.S. rose from 58 to 144 between 1965 and 1980. Today, thousands of musicians graduate from conservatories without hope to find a permanent job, while the players in America's top half-dozen orchestras receive annual salaries of between \$130,000 and \$400,000.⁸⁴ Demand for their services, however, has only marginally increased since the 1960s, resulting in a saturated market⁸⁵ that still caters to a niche audience primarily interested in conservative programming. While it is true that wealthy audiences and foundations have carried the burden to cover these increasing costs, orchestras have done little to develop their value and financial stability, leaving their structure fundamentally unchanged.⁸⁶

As mission-driven entities in a consumer-driven society, orchestras face a success paradox: to achieve artistic gains, they must use up valuable resources and, the more successful an organization becomes, the more resources (i.e. capital and time) are necessary to achieve continued growth and success. Put another way, even the most successful performing organizations find themselves struggling to reconcile their artistic and financial bottom lines. This conundrum is compounded by the fact that many grants

⁸⁴ The base salary for the New York Philharmonic reached \$130,000 in 2009–10, while the concertmaster and other principal players can make upwards of \$400,000 (www.guidestar.com)

⁸⁵ Oversupply of traditional concerts is still a concern for performing arts organizations. In a February 2011 address to theater administrators, current NEA chairman Rocco Landesman made the following remark: “You can either increase demand or decrease supply. Demand is not going to increase. So it is time to think about decreasing supply” (as quoted in Peter Marks, “NEA Chairman Provokes Heated Debate,” *The Washington Post*, 13 February 2011).

⁸⁶ Recording contracts provided America's largest orchestras and their musicians with significant operating revenue from the 1950s-80s, but the shift to digital technology has made it increasingly difficult to monetize recorded content. The Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall represents one possible alternative, but the overhead costs associated with this type of project are immense (please see chapter 5 for further discussion of how orchestras are leveraging technology to meet the demands of twenty-first century audiences).

are earmarked for program-related costs, forcing orchestras and other nonprofits to use other funds to cover general operating expenses. While programming initiatives deliver social impact that can easily be seen and measured, other expenses—including staff salaries, building rental fees, insurance, and even utilities—are critical to an orchestra’s ability to implement these programs effectively. Without more support for infrastructure and research into better efficacy and distribution of their services, orchestras will continue to drain their limited resources.

Yet the stability afforded orchestras by the nonprofit operating model conflicts with the spontaneous creativity associated with the music making process. How can one ensure “vitality and movement in spite of being bound by restrictions that, although necessary, make for excessive stability and can lead to asphyxia?”⁸⁷ Rosanne Martorella and others have shown that, in the opera industry, a yearning for box office success “has led to a conservative, even reactionary repertory.”⁸⁸ Indeed, it is impractical to cultivate flexibility and innovation within the confines of a complex and at times constraining organizational structure that was designed for fundraising purposes. As Lester Salamon and others have pointed out, the historical impetus for these organizations created a structure that is many ways antithetical to modern economic self-sufficiency.⁸⁹ Although the modern nonprofit was designed to solve new organizational problems in the industrialized world, it soon produced its own set of challenges. Relying on donations alone leaves organizations in a precarious position, allowing them little recourse for

⁸⁷ Pierre Boulez, “Arousing Interest in New Music,” in *Orientations: Collected Writings*, edited by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 472.

⁸⁸ Rosanne Martorella, “The Relationships Between Box Office and Repertoire: a Case Study of Opera,” in *Art and Society: Readings in the Sociology of the Arts*, edited by Arnold W. Foster and Judith R. Blau (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 314.

⁸⁹ Lester Salamon, *The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

internal development, growth, and change. Below, I explore the current orchestra funding model in more detail, teasing out economic trends that have shaped artistic practice and reflect the orchestra's unique challenges.

The Income Gap

Due to the complex amalgam of private philanthropy, foundation grants, government support, and ticket sales, the revenue and cost structures of performing arts organizations have received particular attention from scholars outside of the humanities.⁹⁰ Indeed, economic concerns are deeply embedded in the production of a live orchestral concert. As referenced earlier in this chapter, William Baumol and William Bowen released a monograph-length study on the financial structures of and challenges facing performing arts organizations in 1966.⁹¹ It is not a coincidence that their work was published the year after the founding of the NEA, whose funding allowed orchestras to present more concerts and pay musicians a higher wage than ever before. While the claims Baumol and Bowen presented have long been recognized by the business community for their detailed level of analysis and relevance to the arts community, the music world has until recently largely ignored the study, choosing instead to concentrate on art's purely aesthetic value. As the authors point out throughout their book, the disconnect between the performing arts and basic market mechanisms such as supply and demand has caused increasing levels of anxiety that have no easy or obvious remedy.⁹² Despite the efforts of some orchestras to expand the social strata they serve, audiences continue to be drawn from an extremely narrow segment of the population. The financial

⁹⁰ See for example Henry Hansmann, "Economic Theories of Nonprofit Organizations," in Walter Powell (ed.), *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 27–43.

⁹¹ Baumol and Bowen, *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma*.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 8, 405–6.

crisis that the orchestra has been confronted with since its beginnings is not temporary or contextual, but is substantively reinforced by its structure. In point of fact, the sustainability of orchestras and their economic structures is increasingly in doubt.

Although ticket prices and the absolute value of earned income have risen at rates proportional to inflation, these changes have been dwarfed by exponential increases in artistic and administrative costs, a phenomenon explained in part by the orchestra's inability to capitalize on the productivity and efficiency gains experienced in other industries. Unlike in manufacturing, the performing arts do not create easily defined commodities such as a widget or wheel. Since the late-nineteenth century, symphony orchestras have employed between 60 and 120 musicians to perform compositions of a prescribed length; neither ensemble size nor performance time can be easily altered by technology or other work-related advancements. To increase productivity, Baumol and Bowen suggest that orchestras repeatedly program the same repertoire to decrease concert preparation costs. Yet this not only goes against the artistic tenets of most orchestras; it also fails to address the structural flaws of the organizational model. "Even if every major orchestral concert were sold out, the consequent increase in receipts would cover much less than one third of the total financial gap" between earned income and reported expenses, suggesting that demand is only part of the problem.⁹³

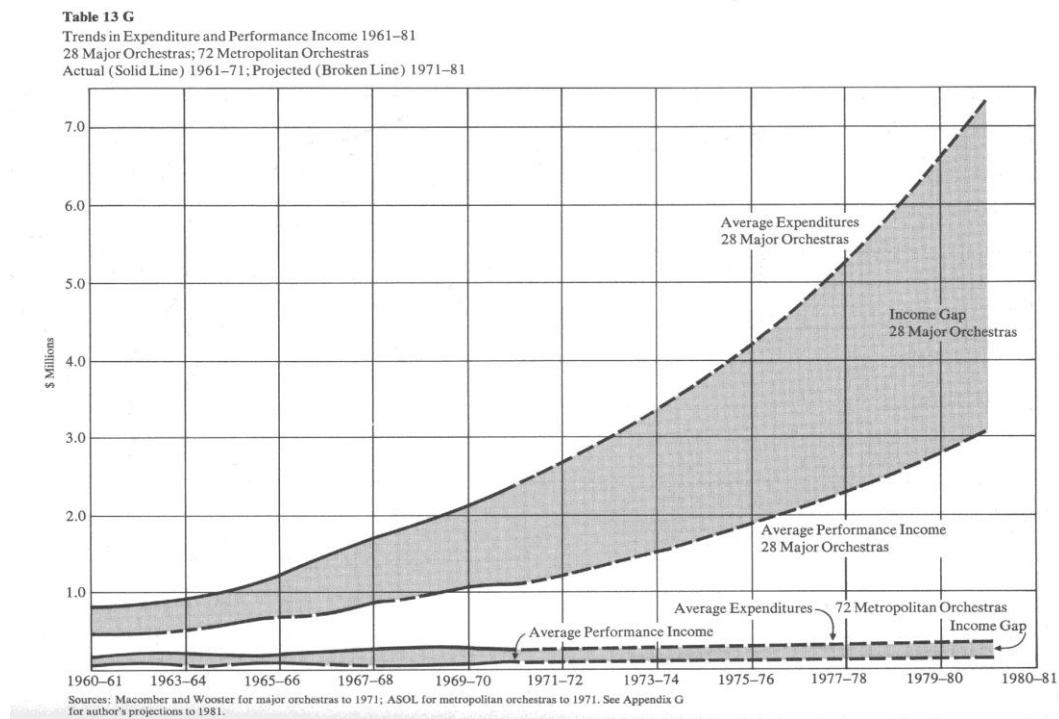
Since the publication of this study, many industry insiders have termed the income or productivity gap "Baumol's curse," lending an almost mythical status to what is in fact a simply explained reality.⁹⁴ The graph below depicts just how seriously this gap grew in the years following the advent of the 52-week season (see Figure 1.2). Between

⁹³ Ibid., 240.

⁹⁴ Douglas Dempster, "The Wolf Report and Baumol's Curse."

1961 and 1971, the industry experienced tremendous growth, both in terms of artistic output, concert attendance (+76%), and operating costs (+196%).⁹⁵ But less than 50% of these costs were covered by concert income, as “the behavior of the 1960s produced an increased earning gap as a result ... of increases in output and wage rates immensely greater than those in the general economy.”⁹⁶ The contributed revenue of foundations, individuals, and corporations have filled this gap and cemented the orchestra’s continued

Figure 1.2 Graph illustrating the income gap⁹⁷



⁹⁵ The data used by Philip Hart to produce this graph comes from the League of American Orchestras and John Macomber and John T. Wooster, *How to Resolve the Growing Financial Crisis of Our Symphony Orchestra*, in *Symphony News* (June, 1972), which includes financial information from the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minnesota (Minneapolis-St. Paul), National (Washington, D.C.), New Orleans, New York (2), Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, San Antonio, Seattle, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Utah.

⁹⁶ Schwarz, “The Economics of the Performing Arts: A Case Study of the Major Orchestras,” 277.

⁹⁷ Courtesy of Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*, 318.

survival, leading to Baumol's prophetic conclusion that that the remainder of "profitable" society must foot costs incurred by performing arts organizations if they are to continue to exist. As recent times have shown us, however, the pockets of wealthy donors and foundations may not be deep enough to save the hundreds of orchestras around the country that struggle to balance their budgets and continue presenting concerts.

While no comprehensive empirical study of the income gap appears to have been undertaken since the 1970s, several reports offer supplemental data that can help clarify its development. Wolf's 1992 analysis provides partial evidence of the gap's continued growth, although a varied methodology and larger sample size make it impossible to directly compare his findings to those of Baumol and Bowen. Nevertheless, his work suggests that the curse has yet to be broken:

In 1971, earned income provided 44 percent of the cost of providing 13,000 concerts, leaving an income gap, per audience member, of \$2.78 that had to be raised from other sources. By 1981, earned income had sunk to 37 percent of expenses for 20,100 performances. Combined with revenue and expenses that had nearly tripled in 10 years, this left a per-audience-member income gap of \$7.95 that had to be raised. In 1991, earned income had improved as a percentage of expenses, coming in at 39 percent, yet revenue and expenses, again, more than doubled over that 10-year period, creating a per-audience-member gap of \$15.91 to be covered by unearned revenue.⁹⁸

The projections made by Baumol, Bowen, and later Hart and Wolf have been anecdotally confirmed by both the League of American Orchestras and Robert Flanagan's 2008 study, but no one has published comparable data to support these assertions. The final chapter of this dissertation includes an updated look at the income gap phenomenon, using data culled from the same twenty-eight orchestras included in the initial 1972 study.

⁹⁸ As quoted in Dempster, "The Wolf Report and Baumol's Curse," 5.

To deal with the seemingly insurmountable challenges associated with live ensemble performance, symphony orchestras have turned to the corporate nonprofit structure, which by definition subsists on philanthropic funds and shields organizations from market forces that would otherwise destroy them. It is not a coincidence that American orchestras have adopted this mode of survival, especially considering the lack of public support they receive. Nonprofits often operate in “industries in which the organization of such firms as governmental entities are serious alternatives.”⁹⁹ This means American orchestras have less direct access to capital and other resources, a fact that is counterbalanced by greater autonomy and flexibility. Economist and organizational theorist Henry Hansmann raises several important points as to why the performing arts in America choose to be designated as nonprofits as opposed to other organization forms.¹⁰⁰ To warrant government support, orchestras must serve the greater public—a benchmark that the symphony orchestra has never truly met. Hansmann argues that the degree of donative financing in the performing arts serves as form of “voluntary price discrimination, the need for which is dictated by the unusual cost and demand structure of [the] industry.”¹⁰¹ Unlike the popular arts—including the movies, pop music, and even Broadway productions—the classical arts feature concentrated demand and unsustainable overhead costs. More than 40% of orchestra and opera ticket buyers donate additional funds to help cover these expenses, meaning that the clients consuming the services and the donors underwriting them are often one in the same.

⁹⁹ Henry Hansmann, “Economic Theories of Nonprofit Organizations,” 34.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Hansmann, “Nonprofit Enterprise in the Performing Arts,” *Bell Journal of Economics* 12 (1981), 341–61.

¹⁰¹ Hansmann, “Economic Theories of Nonprofit Organizations,” 35.

The orchestra is not alone in its struggle to navigate a nonprofit identity that is as cumbersome as it is beneficial. One must remember that, to achieve tax-exempt status, an organization must provide charitable services that result in some kind of public good. These two characteristics are fundamental to the historical formation of the nonprofit sector, but major cultural shifts have resulted in many organizational forms that exhibit dubious ties to their original designation as public charities. The nonprofit's complicated governance structure can also be unwieldy. The San Francisco Symphony, for example, has over 80 board members, many of whom are high profile donors to the orchestra. While these boards may supply fundraising connections and expanded professional networks, they often do not govern effectively. Paradoxically, the perception held by those outside of the sector is rooted in the romanticized image of a small, private charity staffed by volunteers.¹⁰² As the definition of charity has expanded, so has the degree of professionalization and organizational diversity within the sector. Yet the original legislation enforcing the economic structure of these organizations remains relatively unchanged, leaving orchestras ill-equipped to deal with their ever-changing environment.

An Organizational Perspective

When considered en masse, the explanations above suggest that the crisis facing orchestras is to a large degree structural in nature. Although organizational theory might hold new answers as to why these institutions continue to cling to structures and strategies that are no longer effective, few explicit connections between orchestras and the organizational literature exist. Nearly all of the empirical research devoted to the orchestra deals with issues of leadership and team dynamics. J. G. Hunt's eloquent study

¹⁰² Jesse Rosen, "Reality Testing: An Interview with Lester Salamon," *Symphony Magazine* (January–February 2009), 15–19.

of conducting as a mode of shared leadership is perhaps the best example of how orchestras have served as a means to understand organizational behavior.¹⁰³ For Hunt, the dynamic between conductor and musician is derived from the antiquated notion of the *maestro*, or master, in which musicians have no real power or recourse in performance. To be an effective team of creative individuals, the conductor must be a facilitator and mentor (human relations model), an innovator and broker (open systems model), a producer and director (rational goal model), and a coordinator and monitor (internal process model).

This interpretation of creative power stems from Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority, in which artistic leadership is "endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."¹⁰⁴ Yet this charisma is often thwarted by a process of routinization, as administrative measures stifle the unbridled creativity of musicians in an attempt to achieve organizational stability and security. The diffusion of creative leadership serves as a governing principle in Howard Becker's *Art Worlds*, which conceives of artwork as a fundamental product of cooperative activity.¹⁰⁵ Art worlds, defined as "all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which the world defines as art," are social organizations that are largely bounded by convention or tradition.¹⁰⁶ According to Becker, "people who cooperate to produce a work of art usually do not decide things afresh. Instead, they rely on earlier agreements, agreements that have become part of the

¹⁰³ J. G. Hunt, G. E. Stelluto and R. Hooijberg, "Toward new-wave Organization Creativity: Beyond Romance and Analogy in the Relationship Between Orchestra-Conductor Leadership and Musician Creativity." *Leadership Quarterly* 15 (2004), 145–62.

¹⁰⁴ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press and the Falcon's Wing Press, 1947), 358.

¹⁰⁵ Becker, *Art Worlds*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

conventional way of doing things in that art.”¹⁰⁷ This tacit contract between artists and audiences makes conventionalized action less costly in time and energy, but it does not posit avant-garde work as an impossibility—it simply makes it more costly, and thus rarified and marginalized.

It makes perfect sense, then, that orchestras are conservative creatures. In his foundational essay on social structure and organizations, sociologist Arthur Stinchcombe analyzes the phenomena behind conservative, inertia-laden organizations.¹⁰⁸ A high degree of formal organization usually correlates to a relatively high level of homogeneity, allowing populations to preserve their historical integrity. Organizational forms, he argues, tend to be created in spurts, and often align with important historical moments, such as war, industrial revolution, or developments in communication and transportation technology. As time passes and these organizational forms become older, they become more deeply embedded and ritualized. For the orchestra, this means that the schism between high and low culture that defined its very conception is maintained, despite shifts in cultural practice that beg for change. The form and structure of such an organization are thus rooted in its historical context, or in the environment of the past, not the present:

The organizational inventions that can be made at a particular time in history depend on the social technology available at the time. Organizations which have purposes that can be efficiently reached with the socially possible organizational forms tend to be founded during the period in which they become possible. Then, both because they can function effectively with those organizational forms, and because the forms tend to become institutionalized, the basic structure of the organization tends to remain relatively stable.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Howard Becker, “Art as Collective Action,” *American Sociological Review* 39, 770.

¹⁰⁸ Arthur L. Stinchcombe, “Social Structure and Organizations,” in *Handbook of Organizations*, edited by James G. March (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), 142–93.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

In the case of the orchestra, the structure has become wedded to norms that are no longer in place, ignoring important changes to the broader institutional environment in favor of historical precedent. The cycle of embedded organizational forms perpetuates itself, with older forms fostering a sense of familiarity and comfort, even if they are no longer profitable or efficient.

Although Stinchcombe's theory explicates the historical conservatism associated with most orchestras, it does not fully explain why organizations remain tied to ineffective forms, nor does it describe how adaptations and variations occur in the face of mimetic pressures. In her study on organizational imprinting in the context of the Paris Opera, Victoria Johnson resolves this tension between individual creativity and environmental constraints with the concept of "cultural entrepreneurship."¹¹⁰ Imprinting or "time stamping"—the continual recycling of structures and strategies after an organization's founding—has been described as a cultural truism, but Johnson argues that cultural entrepreneurs mediate the tension between individual creativity and environmental constraints, positing imprinting as an agent-driven process much akin to the one enacted by orchestra audiences and musicians today.¹¹¹ Yet while this framework helps to explain how and why cultural institutions like the orchestra were started, it does not clarify why subsequent phases of imprinting occur, enabling certain behaviors of an organization to be reproduced continuously. What happens when these organizations and the rituals they enact are no longer understood by potential consumers, remaining unintelligible to all but a select few? Such a strategic failure is often mirrored by

¹¹⁰ Victoria Johnson, "What is Organizational Imprinting? Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Founding of the Paris Opera," *American Journal of Sociology* 113 (2007), 97–127.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

structural defects that constrain an organization from implementing change, thus creating a self-fulfilling cycle of underperformance.

Management scholars Gerald F. Davis and Richard Scott have provided an updated look at why organizational structure might be constrained by inertial forces.¹¹² They suggest that forms persist because there is either no competitive selection system, or traditionalizing forces and outside ideologies explicitly support these forms.¹¹³ This is certainly true of the orchestra, which is marked by a conservative culture and a strategy of emulation. The misalignment of stakeholder expectations regarding performance—defined broadly—breeds faulty structures, as well. Different groups of consumers (those who attend concerts), customers (those who fund concerts), and other members of the organizational community have different definitions of success and perceptions of value. This fundamental disconnect leads to what Marshall Meyer and Lynne Zucker call the “permanently failing organization,” supporting the argument that despite fundamental differences in perception and expectation, certain organizations are kept afloat by longstanding cultural values.¹¹⁴

The orchestra’s inability to address these issues and adapt to its surroundings is mirrored by the lack of scholarship that confronts these problems. Indeed, these barriers to change make it seemingly impossible for orchestras to escape the “permanently failing” nonprofit model. According to Michael Hannan and John Freeman, “for wide classes of organizations there are very strong inertial pressures arising from both internal arrangements and from the environment. To claim otherwise is to ignore the most

¹¹² Gerald F. Davis and W. Richard Scott, *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural, and Open System Perspectives* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 262, 277.

¹¹⁴ Marshall W. Meyer and Lynne G. Zucker, *Permanently Failing Organizations* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Press, 1989).

obvious feature of organizational life.”¹¹⁵ In addition to being constrained by their own history, organizations face a sector-wide predilection for high inertial forces. They argue that modern society favors organizations with complex and embedded structures, especially when those organizations feature hierarchical layers of management.¹¹⁶ Although Hannan proposes several viable theories of change—including population ecology, rational adoption, and random transformation theory—it seems clear that structural transformation in any context is difficult, and can lead to an organization’s disintegration and downfall.

Nevertheless, this does not explain the orchestra’s disengagement with some basic economic, artistic, and social realities. Understanding these organizations as manifestations of larger cultural or societal systems may help to explain this imbalanced relationship. Edgar Schein’s theory of organizational culture proposes that “the members of a culture hold values and conform to cultural norms because their underlying beliefs and assumptions nurture and support these norms and values.”¹¹⁷ But what happens when these values change? While organizational transformation might be a difficult process, many scholars have theorized what makes substantive change possible. Richard Scott argues that, although the process of institutionalization might inhibit an organization’s nimbleness in reacting to its environment, it does not discount its role as an active player in the process:

Organizations are affected, even penetrated, by their environments, but they are also capable of responding to these influences creatively and

¹¹⁵ Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman, “The Population Ecology of Organizations,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977), 957.

¹¹⁶ Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman, “Structural Inertia and Organizational Change,” *American Sociological Review* 49 (1984), 155.

¹¹⁷ As discussed and quoted in Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 216.

strategically. By acting in concert with other organizations facing similar pressures, organizations can sometimes counter, curb, circumvent, or redefine these demands.¹¹⁸

This is not to say that alternative viewpoints do not exist. DiMaggio's theory of institutional isomorphism implies that, for mature organizational fields, change is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.¹¹⁹ Cultural entities are especially susceptible to isomorphism, becoming increasingly similar even as rational actors try to change them. As the level of interaction between and among organizations within a field increases and a level of awareness among participant organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise develops, an organization's structure becomes increasingly inflexible. In other words, the constraining process of isomorphism forces one organization to resemble other organizations that face similar environmental challenges. DiMaggio also hypothesizes that "the greater the extent to which technologies are uncertain or goals are ambiguous within a field, the greater the rate of isomorphic change."¹²⁰ This certainly resonates with the orchestra industry, which has historically been reluctant to adapt advancements in technology that might make its operating model more productive and ultimately more viable in the contemporary cultural marketplace.

Organizational structures and behaviors can impact artistic practice, as well. Michael Jensen's work on market identities in the American opera industry focuses on how strategic programming trends might be linked to audience development and retainment.¹²¹ According to Jensen's analysis, opera audiences are overwhelmingly

¹¹⁸ W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 132.

¹¹⁹ Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983), 154.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹²¹ Michael Jensen and Bo Kyung Kim, "Great, Madame Butterfly Again! How Robust Market Identity Shapes Opera Repertoires," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting in Boston, 31 July 2008.

conservative in their aesthetic tastes, and newly composed or avant-garde operas presented by these companies serve only to appease artistic convention and expectation, not audience interest. Robust market identities, defined as “the co-existence of divergent but interdependent identity dimensions,” are most likely to appear in markets with divergent audiences and between-category competition. In essence, by staging the token unconventional production, opera companies feign aesthetic development while meeting the conventional demands of their audience.

This same nexus between organizational structure and artistic practice exists in the symphonic world, and is the crux of my dissertation. Although much of the remaining chapters offer a historical perspective, I end the dissertation by discussing some theoretical and practical implications that invite future work on the orchestra and its twenty-first century transformations. The mechanisms and processes associated with organizational change have been widely studied, due in part to the recent volatility of the global finance industry. William Barnett and Glenn Carroll define change as a continuous process, drawing a distinction between core and peripheral change to predict an organization’s likelihood of survival,¹²² while Hannan, Lólos, and Carroll argue that by understanding change as a series of integrated and related transformations, organizations are more likely to achieve long-term success.¹²³ More recently, Fabio Rojas has explored how individuals acquire power through “institutional work,” ultimately overcoming formal constraints to gain authority and enact change.¹²⁴ Little, if any, of this work has

¹²² William P. Barnett and Glenn R. Carroll, “Modeling Internal Organizational Change,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 21 (1995), 217–36.

¹²³ Michael Hannan, Michael, László Pólos, and Glenn R. Carroll, “Cascading Organizational Change,” *Organization Science* 14, No. 5 (September–October, 2003), 463–82.

¹²⁴ Fabio Rojas, “Power through Institutional Work: Acquiring Academic Authority in the 1968 Third World Strike,” *The Academy of Management Journal* 53, no. 6 (December 2010), 1263–80.

explored how change unfolds in the nonprofit performing arts, producing an empirical gap that this dissertation begins to fill.

Indeed, the orchestra's conservative past makes it an ideal case study for when and how organizational forms and practices change in the face of considerable pressures to conform. The most notable research done in this area stems from Jutta Allmendinger and Richard Hackman's study of seventy-eight orchestras after German reunification. They contended that drastic political changes (i.e. socialist vs. non-socialist political rule) resulted in appropriate organizational adaptations only when orchestras had previously exhibited healthy behavior and autonomous leadership.¹²⁵ This tension between strong institutional forces and changing environments resonates just as strongly in contemporary America, where orchestras struggle to reconcile employee expectations with economic realities. According to Dwight Johnson, former chairman of the board of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra,

Neither management nor musicians can afford to apply traditional union-management practices to symphony orchestras. Symphony orchestras are too fragile and too dependent on the good will of their communities to employ the hard-nosed, adversarial bargaining approaches often used in the business world. . . . The price of a work stoppage is too great for the average orchestra. Work stoppages generate ill will for institutions that depend on good will for their survival.¹²⁶

The message is clear: without a more viable or flexible business model, the orchestra's struggle to survive must hinge on mutual trust and community support—something many ensembles are finding more and more difficult to secure.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ J. Allmendinger and J.R. Hackman, "Organizations in Changing Environments: The Case of East German Symphony Orchestras." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41 (1996), 337–69.

¹²⁶ Paul R. Judy, "Organization Change," *Harmony* 5 (October, 1997), 46–52.

¹²⁷ One need only look to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's 2010–11 strike to see how internal conflict and minimal community support quickly leads to an untenable and often virulent environment (see the series of articles covering the strike by Mark Stryker in the *Detroit Free Press*, 4 October 2010–10 April 2011).

Looking Ahead

Although the research cited above offers no simple solutions, an organizational perspective can help us come closer to addressing the challenges these institutions face. Noted composer, conductor, and intellectual Pierre Boulez realized long ago that “what we need is a think tank, to say how we can organize differently and to propose models of organization for those who are unable to conceive of new ways of organizing. . . . Once they have practical models, they can think, maybe, of trying them out.”¹²⁸ While many temporary solutions have been suggested—including pay cuts, increased government support, more substantive collaboration, and leveraging social enterprise to increase revenue—no practical models have emerged. The theories discussed herein indicate that, to successfully break the inertial pressures that currently stifle orchestras, managers must be willing to take considerable risk and reevaluate their organization’s structure, strategies, and mission. While prior organizational success was often rooted in economies of scale, subdivision of work, and well-defined hierarchies of authority, the new global marketplace favors rapid product development, context-specific strategies, and spontaneous team building that focuses on innovation, creativity, and inspired leadership.¹²⁹ Replacing immovable hierarchical structures with process-driven strategies might lead to increased flexibility and productivity.

In 2009 Peter Dobrin was, along with Greg Sandow, one of the most prominent music journalists to publish a critique of the orchestra’s untenable business model. In his words, “Real change happens only in times of crisis. I’d say that time is here—and, if it

¹²⁸ Quoted in Paul R. Judy, “Pierre Boulez: Reflections on Symphony Orchestra Organizations,” *Harmony* 3 (Oct. 1996), 30–38.

¹²⁹ Paul R. Judy, “Book Review: *The Boundaryless Organization: Breaking the Chains of Organizational Structures*,” *Harmony* 4 (Apr., 1997), 92–95 and “The Uniqueness and Commonality of American Symphony Orchestra Organizations,” *Harmony* 1 (Oct., 1995), 10–35.

causes some players and administrators to choose institutional reinvention over personal enrichment, not a moment too soon.”¹³⁰ In the chapters that follow, I aim to show that the “time of crisis” to which Dobrin refers is in fact historically contingent, stemming from structures and strategies conceived at the turn of the twentieth century. Next, I examine three symphonic organizations that have endured structural transformations or adaptations to ensure survival. In each case, I have chosen a crisis or opportunity that demonstrates how orchestras have struggled to align musical and economic objectives with the expectations of their community and broader environment. These examples are by no means exhaustive; instead, they are intended to make a cohesive argument regarding the interconnectedness of history, structure, and cultural production in the American orchestra.

Each of the remaining chapters invokes a variety of methodological techniques to substantively connect organizational behavior and structure with various components of artistic practice, including programming and performance trends, audience reception, and even musical style. Chapter 2 documents the New York Philharmonic’s transition from a cooperative to a corporate nonprofit model in the first decades of the twentieth century. Although this shift came after the incorporation of orchestras in Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Philadelphia, the challenges encountered by musicians and managers in New York illuminates an early struggle to mediate musical and financial concerns through a new operating model. Using material from the orchestra’s archives and programs database, my work builds on the scholarship of Barbara Haws, Howard Shanet and others to connect a shift in organizational structure with repertoire choices, audience

¹³⁰ Peter Dobrin, “Orchestras Need to Program a New Business Model,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 April 2009.

demographics, and artistic reputation, all of which were subsequently shaped by a booming metropolis undergoing cultural upheaval at the hands—and wallets—of a new philanthropic elite.¹³¹

Forty years later, the Louisville Orchestra attempted to transform itself from an unknown regional ensemble to an internationally recognized hotbed for contemporary music. Chapter 3 details the story of Robert Whitney, Charles Farnsley, and the Louisville Orchestra New Music Project, which between 1948 and 1958 resulted in over one hundred world premieres, a newly-formed record label, and a shift in how orchestras supported the creation and performance of contemporary music. From administrative, financial, and artistic documents housed at the University of Louisville archives, a remarkable story emerges that underscores the value of community support for long-term success. Chapter 4 examines the development of an entire youth orchestra movement known simply as “El Sistema.” Ethnographic research and findings from a series of interviews suggest a tension between the movement’s grassroots, community-based structure and more traditional, top-down management practices. The ensuing conflict problematizes the use of classical music as a universal vehicle for social action and questions who exactly is benefiting from this work—America’s youth or the ailing orchestra industry itself. The dissertation concludes by taking stock of the twenty-first century American orchestra and sharing some of the more innovative (and historically-

¹³¹ Barbara Haws, “New York and the Philharmonic in the Time of Mahler: The Transformation from a Cooperative to a Managed Institution,” conference paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society for American Music, 19 March 2010; Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: a History of New York's Orchestra* (New York: Doubleday, 1975); and Mary H. Wagner, *Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra Tour America* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

informed) practices being implemented today, connecting past and present to inform how these organizations confront the challenges and opportunities of the future.¹³²

¹³² Nineteenth-century models such as the collaborative orchestra are beginning to reappear as viable alternatives to the corporate nonprofit; see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion.

Chapter Two

Achieving Permanence: The Reorganization of the New York Philharmonic, 1902–28

Introduction

As America's oldest operating symphony orchestra, the New York Philharmonic Society has been operating on a near-continuous basis since 7 December 1842, when the group presented its first concert at the Apollo Room in lower Manhattan. Fifty years later, however, the Philharmonic could no longer consider itself the country's first or best, as more "permanent" ensembles sprung up in Boston, Chicago, and even New York.¹ Despite their efforts to rival the best orchestras in the world, leaders of the Philharmonic encountered innumerable hurdles in their quest to secure the city's best musicians and present regular symphonic concerts of the highest quality. Indeed, the ensemble's prestigious history as a purveyor of great art is inextricably linked to an organizational narrative that is as multifarious as it is understudied. To quote Gustav Mahler, who would later become the orchestra's music director, "If the purpose of an artistic institution is good performances, then there is an incongruity between means and purpose that can be

¹ The notion of "permanence" becomes a fixation for American orchestra builders in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, when figures such as Henry Lee Higginson and Theodore Thomas began to articulate their desire for ensembles that rehearsed and performed on a regular basis and employed the same ensemble of musicians week in, week out. Walter Damrosch claimed that his New York Symphony Society (founded 1878) achieved "permanence" in 1891 with the help of some wealthy patrons, but the group's chronic under-rehearsal suggests otherwise. For first-hand discussions of permanence in an orchestral context, see John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1951), Theodore Thomas and George P. Upton, *Theodore Thomas: A Musical Autobiography* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905) and Walter Damrosch, *My Musical Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923)).

rooted only in the weakness of the institution's organization."² For the turn-of-the-century Philharmonic, this meant that the power and responsibility previously held by musicians had to be reapportioned to a new class of wealthy philanthropists. In short, a new operating model was needed: one that empowered non-musicians to make organizational decisions while requiring them to shoulder the increasing costs associated with live performance.

Between 1902 and 1928, the Philharmonic capitulated to prevailing market forces, transforming from a musician-owned-and-managed cooperative to a membership corporation administered by a board of volunteers. Yet the popular decree that "Mahler, and no one else ... reorganized and developed the Philharmonic"³ is simply untrue. As Figure 2.1 suggests, the shift toward a corporate nonprofit operating model happened in fits and starts, mediating between opposing factions while negotiating the cultural and economic landscape of industrial America. Over the course of more than half a century, the orchestra's musicians gradually conceded both artistic and administrative authority in the hopes of achieving higher wages, better working conditions, and professional legitimacy. This process, driven by an ever-growing divide between labor and management, was linked closely to the unionization of orchestral musicians at the turn of the century.⁴ The tenuous interrelationships between musician, conductor, and board

² Quoted in the *Neue Frie Presse*, 27 August 1907, 11 (reproduced in Zoltan Roman, *Gustav Mahler's American Years, 1907–11: A Documentary History* (Stuveysant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1988), 38).

³ Max Smith, *New York Press*, 16 January 1911.

⁴ Stephen Couch has argued that "while musicians tended to consider themselves gifted professional artists, an examination of their actual working conditions shows them to have been much more akin to the conditions of factory laborers than to the conditions in which professionals work. The process was not one of professionalization, but rather one which shows marked resemblance to the proletarianization of factory labor" (Couch, "The Orchestra as Factory: Interrelationships of Occupational Change, Social Structure and Musical Style," in *Art and Society: Readings in the Sociology of the Arts*, edited by Arnold W. Foster and Judith R. Blau (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 299).

Figure 2.1 Important Organizational Events, 1842–1928

Year	Structure	Artistic Leader	Administrative Leader
1842	Cooperative	Conductor, in consultation with musician leadership	Board President (musician)
1867			Board President (non-musician) ⁵
1877		T. Thomas	
1891		A. Seidl	
1898		E. Paur	
1902		W. Damrosch	A. Carnegie/R. Arnold ⁶
1906		V. Safonoff	
1909		G. Mahler, in consultation with non-musician board	Guarantors Committee
1910			Executive Committee/Manager
1912	Corporation	J. Stransky	Board President/Manager
1922		Stransky/W. Mengelberg	C. Mackay/A. Judson ⁷
1923		Mengelberg	
1926		Mengelberg/A. Toscanini/W. Furtwängler	
1928		Toscanini	President/Chairman/Manager ⁸

⁵ R. Ogden Doremus is elected the first non-musician president by the Philharmonic members.

⁶ During Carnegie’s tenure as president (1902–09), violinist and Vice President Richard Arnold chaired most board meetings due the president’s absence (Meeting Minutes, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁷ Clarence Mackay (chairman) and Willem Mengelberg (conductor) joined the Philharmonic through its acquisition of the National Symphony Orchestra.

⁸ The position of “president” is given to Henry Harkness Flagler, who joined and enlarged board of directors after the Philharmonic’s merger with the New York Symphony Society.

were only compounded by the addition of paid professional staff and the development of a layered bureaucracy that would subsequently shape how orchestras produced music. In New York, these tensions reached a fevered pitch when, in 1902, Walter Damrosch issued an ultimatum to members of the Philharmonic: restructure so that he have complete artistic authority and a board of non-musicians retain administrative power, or find another conductor. The musicians rejected the proposal, however, preferring to maintain autonomous control until 1909. Yet with the continued exodus of Philharmonic members (to the better-paying Metropolitan Opera) and patrons (to various other New York arts organizations), the musician-led board of directors was forced to accept Mary Sheldon's plan to reorganize the Philharmonic as a "permanent" ensemble managed and funded by a group of guarantors. By the end of the 1908–09 season, Gustav Mahler had been named the ensemble's new music director and the orchestra was well on its way to reestablishing itself as one of the nation's best.

Nevertheless, the Philharmonic's financial state was no better in 1911 than it had been three years earlier, and many of Sheldon's guarantors were prepared to withdraw their support.⁹ Instead, wealthy publishing tycoon Joseph Pulitzer died that year and bequeathed \$500,000 to the Philharmonic, with an additional \$500,000 promised if the orchestra completed its structural transformation from a musician-owned-and-managed cooperative to a board-governed institution, thus cementing a shift that had begun a decade earlier. Using material culled from the Philharmonic's archives, I build on the work of Barbara Haws, Howard Shanet, and others to confront the long-standing myth

⁹ Sheldon had convinced 106 guarantors to give nearly \$85,000 annually to underwrite the Philharmonic's deficit, with the hope that after three years the orchestra would possess a substantial patron base that could cover the majority of the organization's costs through ticket sales and small donations.

surrounding the orchestra's reorganization in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Doing so connects a shift in organizational structure with programming choices, audience demographics, and artistic reputation, all of which were subsequently shaped by a booming metropolis undergoing cultural upheaval at the hands—and wallets—of a new elite. When viewed in this light, the Philharmonic's transformation can be understood as a prolonged attempt to align musical and economic objectives with the expectations of an emerging community.

To understand the details of the Philharmonic's transformation and its subsequent role in shaping artistic practice, we must first consider the underlying reasons why such a shift occurred in the first place. Although some historians have lent credibility to Alma Mahler's claims that Mary Sheldon and the guarantors overworked her husband and accelerated his eventual death, private correspondence and board meeting minutes suggest that something far less sinister was at work.¹¹ Sheldon's—and later Pulitzer's—desire to reinvigorate the Philharmonic likely grew from their involvement in a broader social movement that had been spurred on by the rise of the middle class several decades earlier. While we cannot know for certain why the guarantors chose to save the Philharmonic, I would suggest that their collective motivation stemmed from two seemingly opposing sources: their elite status, gained through the accumulation of great wealth, and their genuine interest in educating the public through the concerts with lower

¹⁰ Barbara Haws is head archivist and historian for the New York Philharmonic, and much of what follows is shaped by my conversations with her and by her paper, "New York and the Philharmonic in the Time of Mahler: The Transformation from a Cooperative to a Managed Institution" (paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society for American Music, 19 March 2010). See also Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: a history of New York's Orchestra* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

¹¹ Most of these assertions originate from contemporary newspaper reports and Alma's *Erinnerungen*, which is notoriously unreliable but has nevertheless been used by historians to link Mahler's death with the guarantors. This topic is discussed in considerable detail later on in this chapter (for more, see Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 193 and Henry-Louis De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler: A New Life Cut Short (1907–1911)*, Vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008 (pub. in French, 1984)).

ticket prices and accessible programming.¹² In one sense, Sheldon and others saw symphonic music as a product to be cultivated for and consumed by the affluent and educated. Yet the class-based markers of orchestral culture contradicted their desire to share this music with a broader public. The resulting paradox suffuses much of the story that follows.

To be sure, the dramatic transference of power from a cooperative of musicians to a wealthy elite is indicative of a more widespread development around the turn of the century. As Thomas Adam, David Hammack, and others have noted, European conceptions of philanthropy influenced the emergence of a modern American “cultural cityscape,” underwritten by a diverse leisure class seeking to exercise their social power and dominate urban life.¹³ Women were an especially important part of this movement, which for the first time enabled them to exercise significant power through their participation on volunteer committees and boards. Although Adam supports his argument by tracing the transnational migration of philanthropy in the visual and plastic arts, the same processes inundated orchestral institutions, which became servants to patrons with ample time and money. This did not mean that Philharmonic musicians were immediately disenfranchised of their powers, however. On the contrary, they maintained significant administrative control until the early 1920s, when some of the more senior members of

¹² This second point is plainly stated in Sheldon’s many editorials concerning the reorganization of the Philharmonic (usually published in *Musical America*), as well as Pulitzer’s original bequest to the Philharmonic (Archives of the New York Philharmonic, also discussed in an article by Arthur Judson in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 6 April 1947).

¹³ Adam later distinguishes between this leisure class and other donors, using German verbiage to point out that while many people would give to the arts (*Spenden*), only the social elite sought to create new institutions and endowments to educate others and cement a legacy for their class and their family (*Stiften*) (Thomas Adam, *Buying Respectability: Philanthropy and Urban Society in Transnational Perspective, 1840s to 1930s* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009). For a broader perspective on the proliferation of wealth and expertise in 1880–1910 New York, see David C. Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1982).

the orchestra retired from their posts.¹⁴ In the end, the guarantors' desire to further the cause of symphonic music and "reconcile the commercially possible with the artistically desirable" outweighed the musicians' principles of autonomy, which were quelled by larger salaries and extended contracts.¹⁵

The Philharmonic was neither the first nor the last orchestra to adopt this new system of patronage, which in time would form the foundation of the modern nonprofit. The artistic consequences of this evolving institutional framework should not be overlooked, as shifts in programming strategies, artistic reputation, and audience reception paralleled the orchestra's reorganization. Analysis of the Philharmonic's annual reports and digital concert database provide a detailed snapshot of the group's repertoire choices, which shift from Beethoven and Wagner to a more heterogeneous assortment over the first decades of the twentieth century. At the same time, the artistic ideology espoused by those in charge began to trend toward public education, reflecting the audience-oriented perspective of a new philanthropic class.¹⁶ Although it may not have been their intention to meddle in the Philharmonic's artistic affairs, the guarantors acquired a degree of control that allowed them to influence what music was performed and for whom. These developments are echoed in the rhetoric used by contemporary board members, patrons, and music critics, whose definitions of "success" and "excellence" depended on an ever-evolving cocktail of musical expression, technical precision, stage presence, and organizational stability. Tracing how these definitions

¹⁴ I refer here most notably to Richard Arnold (violinist and vice president, 1895–1918) and Felix Leifels (double bassist, secretary (1902–21), and manager (1911–21) of the Philharmonic).

¹⁵ As quoted in Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 218.

¹⁶ The repertoire associated with public education was at first no different than the repertoire programmed on subscription concerts: familiar nineteenth-century symphonies and concerti with the occasional work by an American or other contemporary composer. This would later change, however, as pieces such as Britten's *Young Peoples Guide to the Orchestra* (1945) were explicitly designed with education in mind.

changed over time, and understanding such changes through shifts in political and cultural priorities, can help to explain wide-ranging aesthetic trends that continue to shape the audience experience.

The Early Philharmonic, 1842–1902

As one might suspect, the New York Philharmonic and its story have been subjected to considerable scholarly inquiry, and for good reason. Four monograph-length histories along with dozens of articles and a newly digitized archive provide a remarkably rich, and often times contradictory, narrative which contemporary researchers are left to reconsider. Each of the first three histories was commissioned by the Philharmonic for an anniversary celebration and represents more or less a journalistic account of the orchestra's operations.¹⁷ The fourth book, Howard Shanet's *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra*, represents the most recent and rigorous attempt to catalogue the orchestra's history. Published in 1975, Shanet's account builds on each of the earlier studies by providing a more comprehensive analysis of the Philharmonic as both a musical and socio-cultural entity. Buoyed by extensive archival evidence, his work is laudable for its breadth and detail. Nevertheless, Shanet's longtime position as program annotator for the Philharmonic provides an insider's perspective that at times betrays an emotional connection to the orchestra, rendering certain aspects of his history overly

¹⁷ These histories nonetheless provide essential information concerning the Philharmonic's early years, including complete concert and program listings (Henry Edward Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial; Published on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the Philharmonic Society* (New York and London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1892), James Gibbons Huneker, *The Philharmonic Society of New York and Its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospective* (New York: 1917), and John Erskine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943)).

nostalgic.¹⁸ My goal here is to augment Shanet's and others' work by concentrating on the Philharmonic's reorganization and using archival documents to substantiate certain artistic events and developments within a broader organizational narrative that has yet to be considered.

Although the Philharmonic lists 1842 as its founding date, various local orchestras existed much earlier, including the short-lived philharmonic societies of 1799 and 1824, respectively. It was not until 17 February 1853 that the "real" Philharmonic was incorporated under New York state law. Earlier iterations of the orchestra were loosely organized, with musicians giving anywhere between three and six concerts annually at venues like the Academy of Music. Concert admission was limited to a small base of subscribers and friends until 1851. Much like the entities we call corporations today, the Philharmonic was a privately owned, self-governing cooperative that distributed each year's profits amongst its members. Musicians were paid an annual dividend that was calculated as a percentage of ticket sales net any expenses incurred throughout the season.¹⁹ Only the conductor and the librarian received guaranteed salaries.²⁰ Inspired by the orchestras of London (1813) and to a lesser extent Vienna (1842), New York elected its performing members and appointed a small board of musicians to govern the

¹⁸ Some of the longer interpretive passages in Shanet's book tend to romanticize several longstanding myths (including, for instance, his discussion of Mahler's death and its connection to the guarantors).

¹⁹ According to Article 7, Sec. 1 of the Philharmonic's By-Laws, "After the last regular Concert of each season, the Board of Directors shall, after defraying or providing for all expenses of the Society, divide among the actual performing members of the season then passed, the funds remaining in the hands of the Treasurer, with the exception of a small balance, that is to be carried over to the next season; each performing member shall receive his full dividend, or part of the same, according to the time of attendance" (Amended 18 October 1890, reproduced in Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

²⁰ Early conductors of the Philharmonic usually received a certain number of "shares" of each year's profit, but were guaranteed a fixed amount regardless of the orchestra's financial performance. If a conductor were to make more than this, as was often the case, he usually returned the difference to the orchestra (By-Laws of the Philharmonic Society of New York, Article 3, Sec. 5 and 6, amended 19 October 1890, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

Philharmonic.²¹ The board of directors—consisting at first of a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary—was charged with booking concert venues, tallying receipts, hiring conductors, and overseeing elections.²²

If one were to take a closer look at the Philharmonic's early by-laws, one would see just how complex its operations were. Despite giving only a handful of concerts each year, the society boasted seventy Actual Members, all of whom had the right—and as we will see later, the responsibility—to play onstage with the Philharmonic.²³ To be elected to membership, musicians had to not only be deemed proficient on their instrument but also prove their New York state residence, pay a nominal initiation fee and recurring annual tax, and sign a declaration promising to conform to the ensemble's constitution.²⁴ By its second season, the Philharmonic added another class of membership for professional musicians who were interested in attending rehearsals and concerts (also for an annual fee). The "Associate Members" category soon grew to accept non-musicians, presumably to increase the number of tickets that were sold at evening concerts and the

²¹ Musicians wishing to become actual members were elected by ball count, in which exist members could vote "yes" by placing a white ball in a box and "no" by placing a black ball in the box.

²² Additional directors were added to the board at various times throughout the Philharmonic's history (for instance, by 1890 there were ten directors in total), and a trio of trustees was entrusted with any non-musical property that the society owned (Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

²³ By the first decade of the twentieth century, the number of actual members who performed regularly with the Philharmonic had dropped considerably, forcing the board of directors to hire temporary substitutes (see Figure 2.12 for a breakdown of funds spent on substitute musicians).

²⁴ An amended definition of "actual member" can be found in an 18 October 1890 version of the Philharmonic's By-Laws, Article 1, Sec. 1: "Each Actual Member shall be a professor of music and an efficient performer on some Orchestral instrument. Every candidate for membership shall have been a permanent resident of New York or its immediate vicinity during the year previous, and shall be proposed at a meeting prior to that of being balloted for, when a majority of two-thirds of all the votes of members present shall be necessary for election. No candidate for membership shall be balloted for until after having performed at one concert and the requisite rehearsals. Each Actual Member, when elected, shall pay an initiation fee of twenty five dollars, and sign a declaration to conform to the Constitution, By-Laws and Regulations of the Society. Every Actual Member shall pay an annual tax of three dollars" (Reproduced in Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

open rehearsals that preceded them.²⁵ The first woman was admitted as an associate member in 1847, and by the mid-1850s more women than men could claim non-performing membership with the Philharmonic. This trend continued for a half-century, paving the way for women like Mary Sheldon and Mrs. W.H. Taft to become power brokers on the American orchestra scene.²⁶

While women began to voice their interests in the organization of classical music, men of great wealth and repute were given leadership roles within the Philharmonic. Reserved for “eminent citizens” only, Honorary Associate Membership allowed a select group of patrons to attend any Philharmonic concert for free. And, for the first time in its history, the orchestra elected a non-musician president in 1867. R. Ogden Doremus, a chemist and professor at the New York Free Academy, was a long-time admirer and associate member of the Philharmonic. As a well-established New Yorker with intimate knowledge of how professional organizations operated, Doremus was seen as an ideal candidate for the post of president, which increasingly required certain organizational skills and professional contacts that most musicians did not possess. In 1881, banker Joseph Drexel was elected president, followed by E. Francis Hyde (elected 1888) and Andrew Carnegie (elected 1902). The Philharmonic would never again be run by a musician.

This is not to say that the orchestra lacked artistic leadership, however. Musicians maintained considerable power through their participation in annual meetings and on the board of directors. The constant struggle between artistic and financial concerns caused

²⁵ During the 1845–46 season, Associate Membership increased from 12 to 56 (Annual Reports, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

²⁶ Mrs. W.H. Taft, wife of President William Howard Taft, would play a leading role in the formation of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Association in 1894.

the board to hire Theodore Thomas as its conductor in 1877, after a disastrous season in which Leopold Damrosch nearly derailed the orchestra through mismanagement.²⁷ In fact, Thomas had been offered the job in 1876, but declined due to a conflict of interest between the Philharmonic and Thomas' own traveling orchestra, which performed a number of concerts each year in New York. Thomas had enjoyed a long relationship with the Philharmonic, having been elected to Actual membership as a violinist in 1854, but his true calling was as an entrepreneur, managing his own orchestra as both conductor and administrator.²⁸ When he joined the Philharmonic as music director, he continued to conduct concerts with his own orchestra, which "came more and more into direct competition with the Philharmonic."²⁹ The two orchestras soon shared many of the same musicians as well, including future concertmaster and board member Richard Arnold. See Figure 2.2 for a partial list of the musicians who joined the Philharmonic the year Thomas was hired.

Despite his frenetic touring schedule, or perhaps because of it, Thomas' tenure with the Philharmonic was both productive and profitable, at least compared to previous seasons. He conducted nearly all of the orchestra's concerts from 1877 to 1891 and received ten (later augmented to twenty) shares of each year's dividend.³⁰ Musicians also benefited from the Philharmonic's success, enjoying larger dividends and access to a

²⁷ During Damrosch's single season as conductor, the Philharmonic's annual dividend dropped from over \$100 to \$18 per player. After his dismissal in 1877, he would go on to form the New York Symphony Society, which figures prominently later on in this chapter.

²⁸ See Chapter 1, "Early Orchestra Operating Models" for a more detailed discussion of Thomas' career.

²⁹ Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*, 26.

³⁰ Thomas did not conduct concerts during the 1878–79 season due to his role in starting a Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati (Ibid).

Figure 2.2 New membership role, 1877 (courtesy of the Philharmonic archives)

New York September 29, 1877.
We, the undersigned having been elected members
of the Philharmonic Society of New York, do hereby
consent that our interest in said Society shall
be subject to the rules and regulations thereof.

William Leeve.
Carl Pieper.
Joseph Eller.
Carl Khawa.
* Carl Hamm
E. W. Reinescius
Charles Baetens -
Henry Specht.
Richard Klugescheid
J. Ch. Utthoff.
Josef Bayerlitter.
Carl Hennemann
Hermann Gruppe.
Richard Arnold.
Friedrich Hemman
Henry Schmitt.
Friedrich Dietz.
Rudolph Prester.
Henry " " Sachleben

“Sinking-Fund” that served as the proto-pension fund for retired members.³¹

Nevertheless, one must wonder how Thomas’ dictatorial leadership style colored his relationship with the Philharmonic musicians and board. Although the latter’s cooperative structure endowed musicians with the power to accept or reject Thomas’ programming, a series of amendments to the Philharmonic’s By-Laws suggests that musicians were beginning to exploit their own democratic ideals, regularly missing rehearsals and concerts to perform with other musical outfits that offered more money.³²

When Thomas left to become music director of the newly incorporated Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, he left for one reason: the failure to establish a permanent orchestra in New York. In his own words,

What I wished was a large orchestra, sufficiently subsidized to enable it to hold the rehearsals necessary for artistic performances, its object and aim to be to attain the highest artistic performance of master-works, and to set a standard for the whole country, and give New York one of the greatest orchestras of the world. This would have been progress, and the time was ripe for it.³³

For Thomas, the Philharmonic’s cooperative structure had failed to achieve desirable artistic or organizational results. In Chicago, Charles Norman Fay had established a

³¹ According to an amendment to the Philharmonic’s By-Laws, “There shall be a Sinking-Fund, the interest of which shall be equally divided among members who shall have been retired on account of old age or disability” (By-Laws of the New York Philharmonic Society, Article 8, Sec. 1, amended 18 October 1890 and reproduced in Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

³² According to these amendments, musicians could no longer miss a rehearsal/concert for another New York engagement without permission from the board (Article 1, Sec. 2), and members were fined for missing business meetings (\$1), private or extra rehearsals (\$3), parts of regular rehearsal (\$0.50 if late, \$1.00 if more than a half hour late, \$2.00 for leaving early), and public rehearsals or concerts (\$10) (Article 6, Sec. 1). Members also were required to attend three rehearsals prior to performing in concert. In a subsequent amendment dated 7 November 1894, musicians were to be stripped of their membership rights if they did not perform with the Philharmonic for two consecutive seasons. Whether all of these rules were enforced or not is unclear, but Adolph Hartdegen did lose his membership after missing two seasons’ performances (as stated in 30 December 1896 board meeting minutes, Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

³³ Thomas, *Autobiography*, 100.

guarantee fund and a board of wealthy philanthropists that would govern a full-time orchestra of salaried musicians. This model—the corporate nonprofit—would soon find its way to New York, but not without considerable effort.

With the departure of Thomas came another heroic figure in the Philharmonic’s history. Born in Hungary, conductor Anton Seidl continued to hone the Philharmonic’s artistic identity by building relationships with contemporary composers such as Antonin Dvořák and curating what others have called a “Wagner cult” in late nineteenth-century New York.³⁴ This should come as no surprise, given Seidl’s earlier appointment as music director of the Metropolitan Opera and the city’s obsession with Wagner’s music in general.³⁵ According to Philharmonic records, Seidl programmed Wagner thirty-six times during his tenure, making him the most-often performed composer of the 1890s.³⁶ Extant financial records also suggest that the orchestra had achieved some degree of financial stability, prompting the board of directors to increase the number of public rehearsals and concerts from six to eight in 1897.³⁷ Yet it is not clear if the orchestra’s ticket sales continued to cover all of the costs associated with producing and presenting concerts. As early as 1892, Philharmonic president E. Francis Hyde offered a financial guarantee for three special concerts to celebrate the orchestra’s fiftieth anniversary, foreshadowing a move toward private patronage that would continue to strengthen.³⁸

³⁴ See for example Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 251.

³⁵ This “obsession” is well documented in the contemporary accounts of music critics, some of whom found such idolization irrational and unbecoming (see “Decay of the Wagner Cult,” *The New York Times*, 15 April 1894).

³⁶ Beethoven was second with twenty-eight performances, and Dvorak third with fourteen (Concert Programs, 1891–98, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

³⁷ Board meeting minutes, 7 September 1897 (Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

³⁸ In a letter to the board dated 7 October 1891, Hyde writes: “Referring to the recommendation of the Board of Directors, that the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Society take the form of three concerts to be held on the evenings of April 21 and 23, 1892 and on the afternoon of April 22, I take great pleasure in

In an attempt to underwrite the increasing costs of the Society, members of the board began to experiment with various methods of fundraising, including a failed attempt to establish an endowment fund “used for defraying the expense of the Society, for the Society’s Concerts, for Salaries to Officers, Conductor and active Members.”³⁹ The Philharmonic also looked to other orchestras for alternative financing models. After Seidl’s sudden death on 28 March 1898, the Philharmonic hired Emil Paur, former conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.⁴⁰ Like Chicago, Boston was considered a permanent orchestra of considerable artistic quality, a fact that was not lost on New Yorkers thanks to Boston’s monthly pilgrimage to Carnegie Hall. What truly made Boston the envy of all American orchestras, however, was the complete and unflinching patronage of Henry Lee Higginson. In what was a tacit attempt to mimic Boston’s success, the Philharmonic recruited one of New York’s wealthiest men, Andrew Carnegie, to be its president in autumn of 1901. At his first board meeting, Carnegie was introduced amidst cheers, sharing at length his “views about the value of art ... as dependent upon the impression it created with those for whom it was intended.”⁴¹ Just for whom the Philharmonic’s performances were intended is not clear, but there is no doubt that the tension between wealthy guarantors like Carnegie and the broader public continued to shape the orchestra’s future.

saying the I gladly guarantee the financial success of the concerts, and will advance from time to time any monies necessary for preliminary expenses.... In this way, the celebration expenses can be entirely kept apart from the regular disbursements of the season” (Ibid.).

³⁹ This amendment was proposed on 4 October 1901, only to be rejected by the Society’s membership on 30 October 1902 (Ibid).

⁴⁰ Paur’s contract was renewed in March of 1901. He received 42 of 54 votes and was contracted for twelve shares, amounting to no less than \$2,500 each year (22 March 1901 board meeting minutes, Ibid).

⁴¹ Board meeting minutes, 21 November 1901, Ibid.

First Attempt at Reorganization, 1902–08

After the completion of Carnegie's first season as president, the Philharmonic held its annual elections for new musicians and officers on 20 May 1902. Richard Arnold was elected vice president for the eighth consecutive year and Felix F. Leifels was elected secretary, replacing August Roebelen, who had held the position since 1883.⁴² At the same meeting, Walter Damrosch was elected conductor of the Philharmonic, beating out Emil Paur by an impressive thirty-three votes. Damrosch's appointment is significant for several reasons. Like his father Leopold, Walter had made his name as conductor of the New York Symphony Society, and had a history of familial disdain for the Philharmonic.⁴³ Founded in 1878, the Symphony Society programmed newer repertoire, performed more concerts, and marketed themselves more forcefully than their cross-town rival. In fact, Damrosch's orchestra had claimed permanent status in 1891 with the help of a few wealthy patrons, but its reputation for under rehearsed performances made it difficult to overtake the older and more prestigious Philharmonic.

According to Damrosch's autobiography, which freely exhibits a flair for the dramatic, his appointment as conductor of the Philharmonic came as a surprise:

In the spring of 1902, at the close of my second season with [Maurice Grau at the Metropolitan Opera], I received an invitation from the New York Philharmonic society to become its conductor. This invitation was a great surprise to me, as the Philharmonic had been, ever since my father's day, the rival orchestra.... It had always been a cooperative association,

⁴² Surprisingly, longtime violinist and trustee Anthony Reiff, Jr. is absent from the 1902–03 board of directors listing. Reiff, Jr., whose father was a founding member of the Philharmonic, is listed as a non-performing member in the orchestra's records, but that year's annual report lists him as a candidate for the position of secretary, which was ultimately given to Felix Leifels. Minutes from the 20 May 1902 elections meeting list Leifel's adversary as Fred Wagner, so it is unclear if Reiff did in fact run for office or if he simply did not perform for a year. The timing of this result is especially interesting when one considers Reiff's staunch opposition against reorganizing the Philharmonic.

⁴³ Damrosch's feelings about the Philharmonic are stated in no uncertain terms throughout his biography (Walter Damrosch, *My Musical Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924).

composed of the members of the orchestra, who had complete control of its affairs, receiving no salaries, but dividing the profits equally among themselves at the end of each season. I accepted the conductorship, but found very soon that my acceptance was a blunder. The society had come upon evil days, and under its last conductor attendance had dwindled to less than one-half. Of the membership of the orchestra only the skeleton remained, and I found to my amazement that of the hundred players at the concerts, less than fifty were actual members of the organization.⁴⁴

While many of these assertions may be based in truth, they obscure why Damrosch accepted a position with his “rival orchestra” in the first place. As the Symphony Society had been rendered temporarily dormant since 1898, he likely saw the Philharmonic’s lack of firm leadership as an opportunity. With his election in hand, he went about “gathering together a fund large enough to produce the same conditions and results as Higginson achieved [in Boston] ... and, above all, to put the management of the Philharmonic in the hands of a committee which should not be composed of members of the orchestra, but of music lovers and guarantors of the fund.”⁴⁵ Damrosch had instigated what would be the first of several attempts at reorganization for the Philharmonic, usurping artistic authority from the heavy-handed board and delegating business operations to a committee of non-musicians.

At a special meeting called on 18 December 1902, Damrosch expounded upon his vision of a reorganized Philharmonic. According to the minutes,

Mr. Damrosch said that, as the subscriptions to the Philharmonic Concerts had decreased significantly and, as the competition of rival organizations with backing of unlimited wealth can no longer be met by ordinary methods, the only way to successfully compete and keep the Society in the position of the foremost New York orchestral organization financially and artistically is to acquire a subsidy or fund and with this object in view he had approached the President, Mr. Andrew Carnegie.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid., 206.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 207.

⁴⁶ Box 498-01-02, Folder: Minutes 1890–1903, Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, p. 274, Archives of the New York Philharmonic.

It is no coincidence that Carnegie plays a part in this story. Before his appointment with the Philharmonic, he had served as president of the Symphony Society (since 1892) and spearheaded the building of Carnegie Hall with Damrosch in mind. At the December meeting, Carnegie agreed to start a New York Philharmonic Society Orchestra Fund (later renamed the Permanent Orchestra Fund) with a \$5,000 gift, provided that “the performing members of this organization ... contribute five percent of the dividends derived by them from the regular series of eight public rehearsals and concerts ... towards the said Fund.”⁴⁷

By January of 1903 Damrosch’s Fund had become a reality, thanks in large part to a group of philanthropists who had joined forces to help build a permanent orchestra in New York. The fund was administered not by the Philharmonic’s board of directors, but instead by a committee of appointed trustees chaired by Samuel Untermyer. Other members included Mary Sheldon, John Jay Knox, William P. Douglas, Alexander T. Van Nest, Frances Hellman, Miss Caroline De Forest, Lucy How Draper, Isaac N. Seligman, John Notman, Edward L. Rogers, Edward D. Adams, and Harry Harkness Flagler—future president of both the Symphony and Philharmonic societies.⁴⁸ Damrosch approached the Philharmonic board with hopes of receiving a three-year guarantee on his contract, but the musicians declined, pointing out that they were “not vested with the power of electing or appointing officers and, moreover, the election of an officer for a longer period than one year would have required an alteration of the bylaws.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Listed in a letter to subscribers dated 8 January 1903 (Box 006-02-19; Folder: Correspondence Regarding the Formation of the Permanent Orchestra Fund; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁴⁹ Damrosch’s initial request is transcribed in the minutes of a 31 December 1902 meeting (Box 498-01-07; Folder: Minutes 1899–1904; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes of the Meetings of the

Damrosch smartly withdrew his request before it went before the entire membership, choosing instead to take his chances on the success of the Permanent Orchestra Fund and the Philharmonic's reorganization.⁵⁰

The conductor's vision was not realized, however—at least not yet. On 18 February 1903 the musicians of the Philharmonic held a special meeting to discuss the proposition laid out by Damrosch, Untermyer, and the others. A specially formed musicians committee determined that the proposal was in reality “an ultimatum [that], in fact, demanded ... the entire affairs of the organization, financial, governmental, and artistic be placed in the hands of a Board of Directors.”⁵¹ They collectively drafted a letter to the Fund committee, insisting that the reorganization would “seriously interfere with the control of [the Philharmonic's] affairs by it's [sic] members which has always been its vital principle, and that the future prosperity of the Society would thereby be imperiled.”⁵² This sentiment was echoed in a public letter to Philharmonic subscribers. In it, the musicians explained their reasons for rejecting the proposed reorganization: “The Trustees of the proposed fund would ... have a very large voice in managing the affairs of the ... society, but ... *no provision was made for any control by the Society over the fund in the hands of the Trustees.*” [italics theirs]⁵³ The musicians' fear and mistrust of

Directors of the New York Philharmonic Society, Archives of the New York Philharmonic), while the board's response can be found in Box 006-02-19; Folder: Correspondence Regarding the Formation of the Permanent Orchestra Fund; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic.

⁵⁰ Damrosch later downplayed his interest in an extended contract, insisting that he “made it particularly clear that [his] selection as a conductor for the following year was not in any way a necessary part of the reorganization scheme, as it seemed ... that the only way to achieve a real permanent orchestra for New York was to unite the conflicting factions and to let the choice of conductor be made after the organization had been properly placed upon a sound and comprehensive base” (Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, 209).

⁵¹ As quoted in the minutes of a special meeting for members, 28 February 1903. Members of the musician's committee included Anthony Reiff, Jr., Richard Arnold, Felix Leifels, August Roebbelen, Louis Schmidt, and Gustav Dannreuther (Ibid.).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ The musicians go on to explain that reorganization would lead to a dilution of the Philharmonic's artistic standards and current constitution, “which provides that new members shall have resided here a year; shall

the guarantors stemmed in large part from a proposed shift in board composition that would result in a new—and for the musicians, disadvantageous—balance of power.⁵⁴ As shown in Figure 2.3, however, the board remained unchanged, empowering the same small group of musicians and disallowing significant organizational change despite an ever-evolving cultural landscape. The only non-musician elected to the board, Andrew Carnegie, rarely attended board meetings, leaving musicians Richard Arnold and Felix Leifels in charge.⁵⁵

If Carnegie’s attitude toward Damrosch’s reorganization plan was one of indifference, however, there were others invested in its eventual success. The Fund committee continued to fight for what was becoming a losing cause, publishing the terms of their proposal in the *New York Tribune* in an attempt to garner public support. Harry Harkness Flagler wrote an accompanying letter to the editor clarifying the committee’s rationale:

[The orchestra would become] permanent in the sense that its more important members would be subsidized for the season, that it should meet frequently for rehearsal and should give at least one concert in New York each week. Such a plan commended itself to those interested in the

pass a rigid trial as to their competency, shall be recommended by the Board of Directors, and then be elected by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Society” (Letter to Subscribers on 18 April 1903, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁵⁴ According to the proposal, “the directors were to be fifteen, eight representing the society and seven the trustees of the fund (to this, it may be said, the society raised the objection that, the president having no vote except in case of a tie, the board would at the best be evenly divided, and when the vice-president presided the decision would rest with the trustees of the fund)” (Letter to the Editor, *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 March 1903).

⁵⁵ Carnegie wrote a letter addressed to Anthony Reiff, Jr. concerning the reorganization plan, but this correspondence and thus its contents have been lost (Minutes from board meeting held on 26 March 1903, Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic). Nevertheless, Carnegie’s ambivalence comes across clearly in a letter to Damrosch: “It is all to [sic] sad. I cannot quite stand it but don’t be too deeply discouraged” (19 June 1902* (should be 1903), Carnegie Papers, DB Collection, Box 7, Library of Congress).

Figure 2.3 NY Philharmonic Board of Directors, 1900–09 (courtesy of the Annual Reports, Archives of the New York Philharmonic)

Year	President	Vice President	Treasurer	Secretary	Directors
1900–01	E. F. Hyde	R. Arnold	H. Schmitz	A. Roebbelen	Bergner, Klugescheid, Kester, Laendner, Leifels, Schmidt
1901–02	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitz	A. Roebbelen	Dannreuther, Klugescheid, Kester, Kircher, Laendner, Leifels
1902–03	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitz	F. Leifels	Dannreuther, Klugescheid, Kester, Laendner, Roebbelen, Schmitt,
1903–04	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitt	F. Leifels	Bauer, Dannreuther, Klugescheid, Kester, Roebbelen, Schmidt
1904–05	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitt	F. Leifels	Heine, Klugescheid, Kester, Kurth, Roebbelen, Schmidt
1905–06	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitt	F. Leifels	Hauser, Klugescheid, Kester, Kurth, Roebbelen, Seiferth
1906–07	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitt	F. Leifels	Hauser, Klugescheid, Kester, Roebbelen, Ruhlender, Seiferth
1907–08	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitt	F. Leifels	Hauser, Klugescheid, Kester, Roebbelen, Ruhlender, Seiferth
1908–09	A. Carnegie	R. Arnold	H. Schmitt	F. Leifels	Hauser, Kalkhof, Laurendeau, Roebbelen, Ruhlender, Seiferth

movement, for it required a much smaller outlay than would be needed for the formation of an entirely new organization.⁵⁶

What had started as Damrosch's personal mission had transformed into the collective vision of the city's most devoted cultural philanthropists. Yet with the growing dissent voiced by musicians, Damrosch removed himself from the negotiations, setting a precedent of neutrality that music directors still practice today.⁵⁷

By the end of the 1902–03 season it had become clear that the reorganization had failed, in large part due to the inevitable repercussions associated with the empowerment of the guarantors and, by proxy, Damrosch. The conductor later recalled that “the members of the [orchestra] were not unfavorably disposed toward our scheme. The idea of being guaranteed a yearly salary instead of sharing problematic yearly profits naturally appealed to them.”⁵⁸ Yet several of the Philharmonic's senior-most musicians—including Arnold and August—had already been told that this new “scheme” would require their demotion or retirement. This of course was deemed unacceptable, sealing the fate of the proposed reorganization plan. Damrosch conceded defeat to Arnold in a letter dated 7 April 1903, maintaining to the end that

The Philharmonic orchestra of today is incomplete ... [and] some of the best players are often drawn away by other organizations which offer greater pecuniary inducements... To be compelled, as some of your members are, to play at the dances in October and the balls in January is no proper preparation for a symphony concert, and I had hoped that the orchestral fund, judiciously used, would enable us ... to place the orchestra

⁵⁶ Submitted to the editor of the *New York Tribune* on 13 March 1903 and published two days later (reproduced in Box 006-02-08; Folder: Letter to Subscribers; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁵⁷ As orchestras unionized and the collective bargaining process became more complex and tenuous, the role of music director became one of dispassionate and neutral observer. This dynamic is maintained by most of today's conductors, who as a rule do not publicly endorse one side (i.e. management) over the other (i.e. musicians).

⁵⁸ Damrosch, *My Musical Life*, 208.

in a position where its members would no longer be compelled to earn their living in this manner.⁵⁹

Whatever Damrosch's true intentions were, his dynamic and sometimes overbearing personality seems to have split the guarantor's committee into two factions. One, represented by Henry Harkness Flagler, praised Damrosch for his insight and would go on to support the Symphony Society's subsequent resurgence.⁶⁰ The other, represented by Mary Sheldon, would continue without Damrosch to form New York's first permanent orchestra.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. With Damrosch gone, the musicians were back in control of the Philharmonic, choosing to hire esteemed guest conductors instead of a single music director and thus reorienting themselves as the center of the orchestra's operations. Former board president E. Francis Hyde worked with Arnold, Roebbelen, and Leifels to form a Conductor's Committee and procure the best talent available, including Felix Weingartner, Willem Mengelberg, Richard Strauss, and Theodore Thomas.⁶¹ Yet the lack of artistic continuity soon affected the Philharmonic's reputation, leading to the extended appointment of Russian émigré Wassily Safonoff, a conservative conductor who programmed Tchaikovsky more often than Beethoven and Wagner.⁶² He also posed little threat to the musicians, who vetted all of Safonoff's programming decisions and refused the conductor's suggestion that a fourth rehearsal be added prior to each

⁵⁹ Published in the 12 April 1903 edition of *The New York Times* and reproduced in George Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty: America's First Family of Music* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 171–2.

⁶⁰ Flagler publicly lauded Damrosch in a letter dated 19 March 1903, and would later become the primary donor for the Symphony Society in 1914. Upon completion of the 1928 merger with the Philharmonic, Flagler was named president of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society.

⁶¹ Box 498-01-12; Folder: Conductors' Committee Minutes 1904–05; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic.

⁶² In Russia, Safonoff was known as "Vasily Safonov." During his tenure with the Philharmonic, he programmed Tchaikovsky twenty-one times, Beethoven eighteen times, and Wagner sixteen times (Programs, 1906–09, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

concert.⁶³ In late 1908 Safonoff was reportedly offered a three-year contract extension, only to have the announcement reneged less than two weeks later.⁶⁴ While the Philharmonic musicians had preserved their autonomy, the orchestra was “in serious trouble owing to the resignation of a number of its best players,” as members flocked to the Metropolitan Opera and popular theaters for more steady work and better pay (see Figure 2.4).⁶⁵ This attrition included the resignation of eight regular members and two directors on 18 September 1908, forcing the orchestra to hire substitute musicians at an alarming rate. \$8,683 was spent on non-member musician fees during the 1907–08 season alone, exceeding the amount received by the orchestra’s actual members.⁶⁶ As Shanet points out in his book, the Philharmonic “hardly had the right to be called an orchestra anymore; one could say that they functioned more as a cooperative concert management of thirty-seven men who hired the performers necessary to put on a concert

Figure 2.4 New York Philharmonic Membership, 1900–09 (Courtesy of the Annual Reports, Philharmonic archives)

Year	Actual Members	Actual Performing Members
1900–01	74	59 (80%)
1901–02	71	58 (82%)
1902–03	74	59 (80%)
1903–04	72	56 (78%)
1904–05	73	56 (77%)
1905–06	67	54 (81%)
1906–07	70	55 (79%)
1907–08	65	50 (77%)
1908–09	63	37 (59%)

⁶³ According to Minutes for a1 October 1907 Board Meeting (Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁶⁴ The original announcement was published in *Musical America* 8, no. 12, 1 August 1908, 2, while the correction was printed in *The Musical Courier* 57, no. 7, 12 August 1908, 19.

⁶⁵ Reported in *The Musical Courier* 57, no. 6, 5 August 1908, 20.

⁶⁶ The dividend for the 1907–08 season was set at \$266, but only 37 actual members received a full share (Annual Report, 1907–08, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

series.”⁶⁷ With the rejuvenation of Damrosch’s Symphony Society and Mahler’s appointment at the Metropolitan Opera, the Philharmonic struggled to remedy recurring shortfalls in its cooperative structure.

Second Attempt at Reorganization, 1908–11

Richard Arnold, Felix Leifels, and the rest of the Philharmonic board had done their best to maintain the orchestra, but by the end of the 1907–08 season it was becoming all too apparent that Walter Damrosch had been right. Transforming the ensemble’s organizational structure was necessary if the orchestra was to grow and succeed in the city’s competitive cultural environment. Mary Sheldon, an integral member of the Philharmonic’s first guarantors’ committee, had not forgotten that vision and remained committed to the formation of a permanent orchestra in New York. In April of 1908, she gathered twelve other philanthropists to form a new committee charged with the sponsorship and production of four festival concerts at Carnegie Hall.⁶⁸ The impetus for these concerts was Gustav Mahler, who had been invited to New York by Heinrich Conried in late 1907 to conduct the Metropolitan Opera. Although Mahler’s compositions left most contemporary critics bewildered, his reputation as a world-class conductor remained unquestioned. Sheldon and her committee recognized this and, wanting to

⁶⁷ Shanet, 202.

⁶⁸ Along with Sheldon, one other woman served on both the 1902 and 1908 committees—Mrs. William H. Draper. Other members of the Committee for the Four Festival Concerts were Charlotte B. Arnold, Mrs. William T. Bull, Mrs. Foxhall P. Keene, Mrs. H. Van Rensselaer Kennedy, Mrs. George Montgomery Tuttle, Mr. Alexander Lambert, Mr. Dave Hennen Morris, Mr. Patrick A. Valentine, Mr. Felix Warburg, Mrs. William P. Douglas, and Mrs. Samuel Untermyer. The husbands of both Douglas and Untermyer had been involved in the 1902 reorganization attempt (published in a public letter dated 24 April 1908, reproduced in Zoltan Roman, *Gustav Mahler’s American Years, 1907–1911: A Documentary History* (Stuveysant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1988), 129–130).

capitalize on his absence from the American concert stage, set out to hire him.⁶⁹ They also saw an opportunity to try and establish the permanent orchestra they had so long desired:

We feel that a man of Mr. Mahler's eminence ... will have trained the men to such a degree of perfection, that, if in the future, another conductor should have to be considered, this orchestra already formed shall be of such a standard of excellence as to appeal to other eminent conductors should the moment arise to engage them. Mr. Mahler sees the promise of the very best in orchestral development in this country and it only rests with us to determine whether we will support the best.⁷⁰

To be sure, Sheldon's four-concert series was only the tip of a much larger musical iceberg, and while Mahler played a central role in her plan for New York's first permanent orchestra, his participation was not essential.⁷¹ Contemporary reports claimed that Sheldon's plot was nothing more than "the outcome of an attitude of disgruntlement toward former associates in the directorate of the organization conducted by Walter Damrosch."⁷² Damrosch himself cultivated this theory, publicly referring to Sheldon's committee as "two or three restless women with no occupation and more money than they seem to know what to do with."⁷³

Although we do not know if or why Sheldon held a grudge against the Symphony Society's conductor, it is clear that her intentions transcended petty personal conflict. In response to Damrosch's public dismissal, an anonymous author wrote that

⁶⁹ Damrosch and the New York Symphony Society actually beat Sheldon to the punch, inviting Mahler to guest conduct the orchestra on November 29 and December 8 and 3, 1908. According to reports, however, his experience was less than memorable, given the ragged state of the orchestra and its musicians: "Herr Mahler complained bitterly of the orchestra and said that as many members of the orchestra neither came to rehearsals nor, if they did come, stayed as he wished them to, his conducting was reduced to more or less of a farce" (*Musical America* 9, no. 4, 5 December 1908, 4).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ According to an editorial in *The Musical Courier*, Hans Richter was invited to be the conductor of Sheldon's orchestra before Mahler was approached (*The Musical Courier* 58, no. 1, 6 January 1909, 20).

⁷² *Musical America* 8, no. 2, 23 May 1908, 1.

⁷³ Quoted in "Reflections," *The Musical Courier* 57, no. 13, 23 September 1908, 21f.

The orchestral situation [in New York] had been one of despair, hopeless at times, seemingly incorrigible. It is time for “restless” women and others and men with courage and quiet determination to get together and retrieve the situation.... The committee of “restless” women will not stop until the task has been permanently performed.⁷⁴

Sarcasm aside, Sheldon and her “restless” committee took the prospect of a new permanent orchestra very seriously. Sheldon consulted with no less than Richard Strauss and Felix Mottl, who suggested that a world-class concert orchestra must perform 90–100 concerts over a thirty-month season—a steep jump from the nine pairs of concerts produced by the Philharmonic each year.⁷⁵ Such growth would be necessary, however, if a new orchestra was to stake itself as New York’s best. With the semi-regular presence of at least four symphonic ensembles, the city was on the brink of becoming a hotbed of orchestral performance activity.⁷⁶

What the city lacked was a genuinely permanent ensemble and a discerning audience to appreciate it. Sheldon and the other committee members represented a growing community of wealthy Americans who yearned for the rich cultural heritage associated with European high society. And, while the guarantors could not claim Mozart or Beethoven as their own, they could build an American “Vienna Philharmonic” and cultivate the public’s appreciation for transcendent art.⁷⁷ Yet with the abundance of musical talent already present in New York, it made little sense to start an orchestra from scratch. Despite the Philharmonic’s previous refusal to reorganize, Sheldon and Richard Arnold brokered an agreement that would have the society serve as the nucleus for New

⁷⁴ Given the context of this statement, it seems likely that Sheldon wrote it herself (Ibid.).

⁷⁵ “New York to Have Notable Orchestra,” *The New York Times*, 23 August 1908, C1.

⁷⁶ In addition to the Philharmonic and Symphony societies, the Boston Symphony Orchestra traveled regularly to New York, and the Russian Symphony Orchestra presented a series of eight concerts at Carnegie Hall since 1904.

⁷⁷ This statement refers to the Vienna Philharmonic’s reputation as the world’s best orchestra, and not its cooperative structure, which the guarantors were trying to erase in New York.

York's first truly permanent orchestra. It is unclear who initiated this conversation, but it was public knowledge that the Philharmonic desperately needed to undergo "basic reforms that would increase the number of its rehearsals and concerts," and that Sheldon was willing "to provide the necessary funds" to do so, "on condition that the existing cooperative system of management be abandoned."⁷⁸ With organizational structure as its fundamental determinant, a proposal shifting power to the guarantors' committee was drafted on 6 February 1909 and the musicians accepted it without hesitation on February 12.⁷⁹ What had once been an impossibility had become a necessity.

The entire text of the proposal is reproduced below. In it, the guarantors outline a new way of doing things, replacing the Philharmonic's old membership structure with salaried musicians, regular rehearsals, weekly concerts, and a third-party management system. Total artistic authority was shared between the appointed conductor and a newly formed board, which consisted of only three musicians and seven guarantors.

Proposal for Reorganization⁸⁰

It is proposed to organize an orchestra in New York for the performance of the highest order of music, under the exclusive and absolute direction of a competent conductor, the members of which shall devote their time to its work for a period of at least twenty-three weeks in each year. It is possible, with your cooperation, to use the corporate form of the Philharmonic Society for the purpose and thus enlarge its activities, place it on a more stable basis and at the same time cherish its history and traditions. To do this, however, involves some radical changes in its

⁷⁸ The first quotation comes from an editorial by music critic Richard Aldrich in *The New York Times* (published 20 December 1908), while the second comes from a letter by Mary Sheldon published in *The New York Press* on 11 December 1908 (reproduced in De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 365–66).

⁷⁹ According to the minutes of a special members' meeting called on 12 February 1909, "The following action was taken by the Society: regularly moved and seconded to suspend all By Laws that may conflict with the business arrangement of the foregoing proposition. Carried unanimously" (Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

organizations and methods, the principal one of which is the employment of the members of the orchestra for a fixed period upon a stated salary, irrespective of their membership in the Society, to give their time to the work of the orchestra during the term of employment. With the approval of the conductor, the present orchestra will be continued under existing conditions of assignment and retirement.

A further and quite as necessary a change is to place the management of the affairs of the Society entirely under the control of the persons who will finance the undertaking. With this end in view certain persons, whose names are appended hereto (and it is understood others may be added to this list from time to time), have undertaken to make good to the extent of the amount set opposite their names respecting any deficiency in the receipts of the Society to meet its expenses (including the expenses of its conductor) in each of the three years beginning October 1, 1909, provided that the Society be reorganized upon a basis satisfactory to a designated committee.

As such Committee we beg, on their behalf, to lay before you the following proposition:

The Guarantors will undertake to make good the deficiency, if any, to the receipts of the Society for the ensuing three years, beginning October 1, 1909, and to advance from time to time the necessary funds to meet current expenses, upon the following conditions:

- 1) The Board of Directors of the Society and its officers shall consist of such persons as the Committee shall designate, of whom at least three shall always be chosen from the actual members as at present defined in the By Laws [i.e. musicians].
- 2) The Board of Directors shall chose such officers, conductor, manager, and other employees, make such contracts, and take such other action as the Committee shall designate, and shall take no action without its approval.
- 3) The Conductor, subject to the approval of the Committee, may change and add to the membership of the orchestra, and the Board of Directors shall make such contracts with the member of the orchestra as the Committee shall require. The Committee undertakes that the contracts shall not be for a less period than twenty-three successive weeks.
- 4) The By Laws shall be amended as required by the Committee.
- 5) No new member of the Society shall be elected except with the approval of the Committee.

6) The existing Pension Fund will be administered only for the benefit of the existing members of the Society, by a Committee which the present organization of the Society may elect. We may add that the Guarantors hope, in the ensuing three years, to raise an endowment fund which will establish the orchestra upon a permanent basis, and in that event the guarantors should have a prior rate to continue the orchestra.

We venture to submit herewith a form of resolution to be passed by the Society, which we shall deem a satisfactory acceptance by the Society of our proposition, and under which contracts for the ensuing season may be made with a conductor and members of the orchestra.

Resolved that the proposition of the persons named in the letter, signed by Mary R. Sheldon, Ruth Dana [Draper], Henry Lane [Eno], Ernest H. Schelling, George R. Sheldon, and Nelson D. Spencer, dated February 6, 1909

As reflected in the first line of this proposal, the Philharmonic, which had originally served a utilitarian function for working musicians, was on its way to becoming a bastion for high art.

To see her plan through to fruition, Sheldon had recruited 91 guarantors who had promised to collectively deliver \$85,363 each year for three years to match any costs not covered by ticket sales.⁸¹ Between February 1909 and the spring of 1911, a small committee consisting of Sheldon (chairwoman), Ruth Draper, Nelson Spencer, Henry Eno, Ernest Schelling, and musicians Richard Arnold and Felix Leifels (secretary) met nineteen times and acted as the Philharmonic's formal governing body.⁸² The original board of directors was not officially dissolved until 1912, but most of the orchestra's musicians were rendered powerless by the guarantors, with the exception of Arnold and

⁸¹ In actuality, the total guarantee fund consisted of \$64,563 renewed for three years and \$20,800 in one-time donations that would "probably be renewed in succeeding years, but as no promise to renew accompanies them, the total for the purposes of the guarantee fund, is to be divided into three parts, one part for each of the three years." The largest gift, \$15,000, was given by Joseph Pulitzer (Ibid.).

⁸² Box 498-01-13; Folder: Guarantor's Minutes 1909-11; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic.

Leifels.⁸³ Mahler's contract was ratified on 30 March 1909, and the terms were ambitious. His salary of \$25,000 may seem exorbitant when compared to those of previous conductors, but Mahler's scheduled workload included forty-six concerts over a twenty-four week period—far short of the 100 concerts suggested by Strauss but an astonishing augmentation of the eighteen performances programmed during the 1908–09 season. The guarantors clearly felt that by producing more concerts, the orchestra could sell more tickets, improve its artistic quality, and become the standard bearer for American orchestras.

Mahler got to work almost immediately, conducting two trial concerts on 31 March and 6 April 1909 featuring Beethoven's Symphonies no. 7 and 9, respectively. Reviews were mixed, although there was universal agreement on the complete incompetence of the timpanist, who "bombarded" listeners' ears with his playing.⁸⁴ Richard Aldrich of *The New York Times* thought "the playing of the orchestra was of a remarkable precision, rhythmic energy and elasticity and a pulsing vitality that have long been absent from it,"⁸⁵ while the *Tribune's* Henry Krehbiel remarked that the orchestra "played as they have played when masters have called on them on rare occasions in the past. Not only was the tone of the band brilliant but there was amazing crispness of

⁸³ On 21 March 1909, Arnold was appointed administrative manager (with a salary of \$3,500), and Leifels was named business manager (\$2,000). Both positions were prominently listed on the cover sheet of the Philharmonic's programs for the 1909–10 season. Andrew Carnegie resigned his post of president in 1909.

⁸⁴ It is not clear if the timpanist's overly-dramatic playing was prescribed by Mahler or not, but critics wrote that "Mr. Mahler is exceedingly enamored of the timpani. In the process of time he will discover that the acoustics of . . . Carnegie Hall deal generously with the beat of a drum, and he will doubtless be merciful (*The New York Sun*, 1 April 1909, 7). The *Tribune* was less playful in its critique: "Those who think Beethoven wished to have the ears of his auditors assaulted as they were last night be the kettledrum player must have been delighted by the bombardment to which they were subjected; others must have felt outraged. Traditions extending over generations have not prepared New York's lovers of the symphony for such a reading" (*New York Tribune*, 7 April 1909, 7).

⁸⁵ Richard Aldrich, Review in *The New York Times*, 1 April 1909.

attack, precision and homogeneity of tone.”⁸⁶ Yet Krehbiel, who would become one of Mahler’s harshest critics, later rescinded his compliments, lamenting that the concerts “seem to have been arranged for the purpose of provoking comparisons, not only between rival bands and rival conductors, but between the performances of the same band under different conductor.”⁸⁷ He is referring, of course, to Damrosch and the Symphony Society, who considered Mahler and the Philharmonic bitter rivals.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the guarantors had come a long way in realizing their vision for a permanent orchestra in New York: “Mrs. Sheldon, Mrs. Untermeyer and the ‘permanent fund’ raisers, who know by now something more of their public, looked down from their boxes last night. They had shown this public that their dream of a ‘new Philharmonic’ may come true.”⁸⁹

The Philharmonic’s reorganization was viewed as a step in the right direction by many, including Mahler, who had resigned his post with the Vienna Philharmonic after growing dissension with the orchestra’s musicians. Yet while Mahler’s artistic direction no longer hinged on the preferences of a musicians’ cooperative, he would still have to temper his musical ideals with the expectations of Sheldon and the guarantors. The relationship between Mahler and the guarantors’ committee has become the stuff of legend, but archival documents and private correspondence suggest that their interactions were relatively benign. The Philharmonic’s directors entrusted—even expected—Mahler

⁸⁶ Henry Edward Krehbiel, Review in the *New York Tribune*, 1 April 1909.

⁸⁷ Quoted in De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 391.

⁸⁸ Damrosch’s disdain for the Philharmonic is no surprise, especially when one considers his own failed attempt at reorganizing the Philharmonic and the roles Mary Sheldon and Missy Untermeyer played in hiring Mahler. Both women had previously supported and served on the board of the Symphony Society. De La Grange goes so far as to describe the relationship between the two New York orchestras as “guerilla warfare” (Ibid, 382).

⁸⁹ Probably penned by James Gibbons Huneker, *Evening Sun*, 7 April 1909 (quoted in De La Grange, 388). There were, of course, those that disagreed. According to Anthony Reiff, Jr., the organization “is merely an experiment, after its trial the old order may be restored to vogue” (*Musical America* 10, no. 4, 5 June 1909, 2).

to reshape the orchestra and hire the best musicians available, including a new concertmaster, principal flute, and timpanist.⁹⁰ Indeed, Mahler was for the most part “in full control ... of the programming and personnel,” replacing nearly half of the old Philharmonic’s roster prior to the first concert of the 1909–10 season.⁹¹

Even if the guarantors granted Mahler considerable artistic license, however, he had to negotiate the rules and regulations of New York’s musicians’ union, which had amassed considerable power since its founding in the mid-nineteenth century. In accordance with the union’s “sixth-month” rule, which required foreign-born musicians to live in the United States for half a year before entering into union contracts, Mahler encountered great difficulty in his attempts to hire musicians who lived and worked in Europe. His frustration with the union’s restrictions is reflected in a personal letter to Richard Arnold, who had traveled to visit Mahler in Toblach to discuss personnel and programming for the upcoming season.⁹² Although Mahler’s correspondences from that summer suggest that union-related squabbles were front of mind, he was nevertheless able to procure the area’s finest musical talent. Given the excitement associated with his own appointment and a newly instated weekly salary of \$35, Mahler was able to attract

⁹⁰ Mahler was authorized to spend up to \$6,000 in hiring the Philharmonic’s new concertmaster (Guarantors’ Minutes, 7 April 1909, Box 498-01-13; Folder: Guarantor’s Minutes 1909–11; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic), and in March 1909 he wired friend and protégé Bruno Walter in an attempt to hire Viennese flautist Franz Dreyer, timpanist Johann Schnellar and a “splendid” trumpeter. Due to union restrictions, he later hired a timpanist from Pittsburgh (De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 368, 421).

⁹¹ Most of these changes were to the wind and brass sections. According to Zoltan Roman, “Of the 102 players listed in the programme for one of the last concerts under Safonoff (March 5, 1909), only 56 appear in the list for Mahler’s opening concert on November 4th. Of the smaller orchestra of 92 listed in November, only 55 players had been members of the ensemble in March” (Roman, *Gustav Mahler’s American Years*, 248).

⁹² In this letter, Mahler repeatedly italicizes the word *union*, presumably to express his displeasure with the meddlesome restrictions they imposed. These restrictions directly impacted Mahler’s personnel choices, leading to the appointment of new Philharmonic concertmaster Theodore Spiering, whose German training belied his U.S. citizenship and good standing in the Chicago musicians’ union (letter dated summer 1909, reproduced in *Ibid.*, 262–4).

principal players from both the Boston Symphony and Metropolitan Opera orchestras—two ensembles that had historically pilfered musicians from the Philharmonic.

Upon the start of Mahler's first full season as music director, critics noticed continued improvement in the orchestra's "technical proficiency," "brilliant tone," and an "amazing crispness of attack."⁹³ Such advancements were to be expected, given the Philharmonic's new rehearsal schedule and Mahler's reputation as an orchestral task master. With hopes that the orchestra's new success was just the beginning of a long and fruitful development, some critics tempered the immediacy of their praise and suggested that higher standards would yet be attained. According to the *New York World*, "one must remember that as Rome was not built in a day, neither is a first rate symphony orchestra made in one series of nine rehearsals, even under such a master as Mahler."⁹⁴ The Philharmonic's guarantors were no doubt pleased by the orchestra's artistic progress, and hoped that it would translate into box office success and organizational stability. To quote *Musical America*,

The advent of Gustav Mahler as conductor ... and the re-establishment of the orchestra upon a permanent basis ... has raised the organization to a standard that make[s] it possible ... [to] establish a business system calculated to keep the Philharmonic well in the front rank of the great orchestras of the world.⁹⁵

To ensure the proper management of what was now a full-time orchestra, Sheldon and the guarantors relinquished day-to-day control of the Philharmonic to a professional

⁹³ These adjectives, used to describe the Philharmonic's performances in the fall of 1909, are pulled from several reviews printed by the *New York World*, *The New York Times*, and *Musical America*. Notice that Krehbiel's *Tribune* is conspicuously absent from this list.

⁹⁴ Review in the *New York World*, 5 November 1909, 6.

⁹⁵ *Musical America* 11, no. 25, 30 April 1910, 5.

administrator.⁹⁶ Although Felix Leifels had held the position of business manager since the beginning of the 1909–10 season and had been offered a \$7,000 contract extension, the guarantors eventually hired Loudon Charlton.⁹⁷

Charlton was deemed suitable for the job based on his qualifications as a well-known concert and artist manager, representing pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch, among others. Yet just as would happen with Arthur Judson several decades later, Charlton was roundly criticized in the press for promoting his own clients through Philharmonic performances, something that Sheldon firmly denied.⁹⁸ She insisted that “Mr. Charlton . . . has no hand in the regulation of the artistic side” of the Philharmonic.⁹⁹ Indeed, it seems as if the responsibility of engaging soloists lie with Mahler alone, although there is some conflicting evidence to the contrary.¹⁰⁰ Regardless of Mahler’s autonomy in shaping artistic policy, Charlton’s influence was short lived. After only a year on the job, he was

⁹⁶ Mary Sheldon resigned her position as chairman of the board on 21 December 1909, and was subsequently elected vice chairman. No reason is given for this voluntary demotion, although one can infer that increasingly poor health forced her to scale back her commitments to the Philharmonic (Board Meeting Minutes, 21 December 1909, Box 498-01-13; Folder: Guarantor’s Minutes 1909–11; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

⁹⁷ It is not clear from board meeting minutes why Leifels rejected this contract extension, although he would soon have another chance to become the orchestra’s manager, following Charlton’s dismissal in 1911.

⁹⁸ One writer for *The Musical Courier* insisted that the hiring of a new business manager “reflected the desire of these ladies [the guarantors], who found, after a few months, that management under experienced hands was essential if they wanted audiences. It did not occur to me that a manager would be selected who had a bureau of his own with his own artists, for that would, at once, create an unnecessary conflict” (“Reflections,” *The Musical Courier* 61, no. 2, 13 July 1910, 6).

⁹⁹ Quoted in *The Musical Courier* 61, no. 19, 9 November 1910, 35.

¹⁰⁰ According to De La Grange, Mahler happily left certain artistic decisions to the Philharmonic’s manager and directors (De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 1040). The complex and often tacit negotiation of artistic policy between Mahler and the guarantors will be dealt with in considerable detail later on in this chapter.

replaced by none other than Felix Leifels, who retained at least partial administrative control of the Philharmonic until Judson's appointment in 1922.¹⁰¹

Before delving into the heavily mythologized relationship between Mahler and the guarantors, we must first understand the formal channels through which they influenced and communicated with one another. Between 25 January and 1 February 1911, a new executive committee was appointed and charged with governing the orchestra "during the intervals between meetings of the General Committee.... [But the] Committee shall not have the power to authorize the making of any contract for the engaging of a conductor, manager, or members of the orchestra."¹⁰² In addition to the creation of an executive committee, the guarantors formed finance and program committees to "prepare a scheme for the raising of all funds necessary for the work of the organization" and "supervise the selection of music to be played at the various concerts of the Society."¹⁰³ Much has been made about the formation of these three sub-committees and their intrusion into Mahler's leadership of the Philharmonic, but it is unclear what role if any they played in substantively shaping the orchestra's artistic policy or aggravating Mahler's illness.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Leifels' final contract, dated 1 April 1918 and slated to last three years, included an annual salary of \$15,000 (Box 025-03-20; Folder: Contract with Felix Leifels 2/1/18; Record Group: Finance and Personnel, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁰² The Executive Committee consisted of Mary Sheldon, Joseph Choate, Rudolf Flinsch, and Felix Leifels (1 February 1910, Meeting Minutes, Box 498-01-13; Folder: Guarantor's Minutes 1909-11; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ According to Henry Louis De La Grange, "Mahler's situation with his employer, the Guarantor's Committee, was influenced by these new measures. Instead of being subject to the authority of a fairly large group of society people who did not meet often, and whose musical competence was limited, he was now de facto under the authority of two much smaller groups, the Executive and Programme committees" (De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 1163). Archivist Barbara Haws disagrees: "'The previous Philharmonic cooperative organizational system was committee-driven with specific groups responsible for 'business', 'audit', the 'library', 'election and 'program', all of them submitting reports to the general membership. In rereading the Guarantor's minutes they seem to be in search of an adequate management structure that will

Mahler's Death and a New Philharmonic

By the winter of 1911, Mahler's relationship with both the musicians and the guarantors was tenuous at best. The conductor had asked that his salary be augmented to \$30,000 due to an increased concert load (66, up from 46 the season prior). After ongoing negotiations arbitrated by Samuel Untermyer, the guarantors' committee agreed to supplement Mahler's existing contract with an additional \$3,000.¹⁰⁵ Mahler's financial demands, which were likely influenced by his wife Alma's extravagant lifestyle, compelled the guarantors to consider another conductor for the 1911–12 season.

According to minutes from a committee meeting,

The question of engaging a conductor for next season was discussed. A letter from Mr. Franz Kneisel, who has been unofficially requested to state if his services for the position of Conductor are available, was received and read. Mr. Kneisel stating at length that he would feel highly honored to accept the position, that however, he cannot leave his present field of activity for a contract of one year only. It was resolved ... to unofficially inquire from Mr. Mahler his attitude regarding the acceptance of the position of conductor for next season and also his terms.¹⁰⁶

Thus although the guarantors' relationship with Mahler was marked by moments of mistrust, it appears as though they remained committed to, or at least accepting of, Mahler as the Philharmonic's primary conductor.

function for them and it appears that they have turned to the experiences among them—the members of the old Philharmonic committee. I do not believe that the Program Committee was created because they were dissatisfied with Mahler's programming, but that it was formed at the same time as the Executive Committee and the Auditing Committee to create a structure that would survive any conductor and be fiscally responsible to donors" (Ibid., 1170–71).

¹⁰⁵ Quoting minutes from a guarantors' meeting on 4 January 1911, "Mr. Mahler has appeared with a committee ... before Mr. Samuel Untermyer as arbitrator regarding a demand of Mr. Mahler for an addition to his salary of \$5,000 for conducting an extra 20 concerts during the previous season.... The decision of the arbitrator was rendered against the Committee but that Mr. Mahler has conceded, at the suggestion of Mr. Untermyer, to reduce his claim to \$3,000" (Box 498-01-13; Folder: Guarantor's Minutes 1909–11; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

This is not the sense one gets when reading excerpts from Alma Mahler's *Erinnerungen*, however. Published some ten years after her husband's death, Alma's personal memoirs include several passages concerning Mahler's position with the Philharmonic, most of which are full of critique and disdain for the guarantors. One in particular is worth quoting here: "One day in mid-February [1911] he was asked to go and see Mrs. Sheldon.... There he found several gentlemen from the Committee. He was severely taken to task ... [and] was so taken aback and furious that he came home trembling in every limb."¹⁰⁷ While there is further evidence that such a meeting occurred, one must wonder what actually took place. As De La Grange and others have pointed out, Alma Mahler's written recollections often exaggerate and even misrepresent events and facts. But why would the guarantors call Mahler to a private meeting with only two months left in the season, and what were they chastising him for? Given the context provided above, it seems reasonable to extrapolate that the meeting pertained to Mahler's contract renegotiation. If this was indeed the case, the guarantors were simply fulfilling their fiduciary duties as overseers of the Philharmonic and its mission. Although the atmosphere surrounding these negotiations was surely unpleasant, there is no reason to believe that the guarantors were maliciously intruding on their conductor's artistic vision, nor that Mahler was aware of the recent formation of a programming committee.¹⁰⁸

When more than a month had passed since Mahler's last concert on 21 February 1911, however, newspapers began reporting that "there is division somewhere within the Philharmonic ... It is well known what happens to a house divided against itself. Until the

¹⁰⁷ Alma Mahler, *Erinnerungen*, translated and quoted in De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 1157.

¹⁰⁸ According to De La Grange, "A cat and mouse game had been going on ... since the beginning of the season. Mahler, for his part, wanted to make sure that his musical, artistic, and financial demands were accepted. On the other hand the Guarantors wanted—in fact needed—to draw up and economic plan that would establish the orchestra on a sound footing for the future" (Ibid., 1163).

Philharmonic Society awakens to the true nature of its difficulties there is no possibility that it can succeed in the high enterprise upon which it ventured forth at the time of its reorganization.”¹⁰⁹ Due in part to Alma’s erroneous claims, historians have continued to lend credence to the theory that Sheldon and the ladies of the guarantors’ committee were responsible for Mahler’s return to Vienna and his eventual death.¹¹⁰ What in reality was caused by a fatal infectious disease has instead been explained by the supposed ideological disparity between Mahler’s Viennese upbringing and New York’s relatively conservative musical community.¹¹¹ To be sure, Mahler and the guarantors had their disagreements, which were likely exacerbated by the conductor’s declining health, his poor command of the English language, and Alma’s never-ending conspiracy theories.¹¹² That said, there is no hard evidence that proves Mahler felt overly constrained or mistreated by the guarantors, and certainly nothing that would precipitate his death on 18 May 1911.

Whether the guarantors were acting selflessly to better the state of orchestral performance in New York or were leveraging their elite status to wield power over an artistic institution is up to interpretation, but it seems clear that they were searching in earnest for an organizational structure that would support a permanent orchestra of the highest quality. As one of “the most conservative musical centers in the world,” turn-of-

¹⁰⁹ “The Philharmonic’s Danger,” *Musical America*, 18 March 1911.

¹¹⁰ Alma’s comments regarding Mahler’s death place the blame squarely at the feet of the guarantors. After the Philharmonic’s first performance of Mahler’s own First Symphony on 16 December 1909, Alma falsely claimed that “the ladies had decorated the podium with wreaths, had placed the violins at the back and below, and had grouped the brass around him,” thus ensuring the failure of its public performance (De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 591).

¹¹¹ In the last book of his five-volume biography of the composer, De La Grange provides substantial scientific evidence that Mahler died of a previously diagnosed heart disease (Ibid.).

¹¹² In what has become an oft-cited axiom, Alma alleged that “In Vienna [her] husband was all powerful. Even the Emperor did not dictate to him, but in New York, to his amazement, he had ten ladies ordering him around like a puppet” (quoted in Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 193). To be sure, “The main culprit in spreading the legend of Mahler’s ‘failure’ was surely Alma herself” (De La Grange, 1194).

the-century New York was at once ripe for and resistant to cultural upheaval.¹¹³

Convincing the city's music critics and listening public of the inherent value embedded in a permanent civic orchestra would take considerable time and persistence. Unfortunately for Mahler, the Philharmonic would not acquire the support necessary to complete its reorganization until after his death. But the conductor's departure was not a prerequisite for the corporate model to take root in New York. On the contrary, the progress achieved during Mahler's tenure created an essential foundation on which future efforts could build.

Josef Stransky and the Pulitzer Bequest, 1911–21

Suddenly without a conductor, the Philharmonic had to move quickly if it was to continue presenting concerts and operating as the city's foremost orchestra.

Concertmaster Theodore Spiering filled in as temporary conductor for the remainder of the 1910–11 season, and Felix Leifels left for Europe in search of another virtuoso music director with the name recognition to attract American audiences. To be sure, the summer after Mahler's death must have been a challenging one for all of those that had supported the Philharmonic in its transformation from a musician's cooperative to a corporate nonprofit. And, with Leifels in Europe and Mary Sheldon increasingly absent from committee and board meetings, the orchestra's leadership was at a crossroads. Since 1909, much of the power that had previously been allotted to musicians had become the purview of the guarantors' committee. The divide between the old Philharmonic board and the guarantors is reflected in the scheduling and documentation of administrative tasks. No annual meetings were held in 1910 or 1911, and minutes from the guarantors'

¹¹³ De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 1167.

meetings were kept in a separate diary until the beginning of the 1911–12 season, when Leifels returned from Europe and began recording minutes in the orchestra’s pre-1909 notebook. It seemed as if the old Philharmonikers had returned to power, both symbolically and literally.¹¹⁴ Subsequent board meetings became all-musician affairs, leading to the somewhat unexpected appointment of upstart Czech conductor Josef Stransky as the orchestra’s new music director.¹¹⁵

Although Stransky brought some much-needed consistency to the Philharmonic, the orchestra’s uncertain artistic future was compounded by a faltering business model. The Philharmonic’s finances were no better in 1911 than they had been three years earlier, due in part to stagnant ticket sales and the ever-increasing costs associated with weekly performances.¹¹⁶ For each and every performance, ticket receipts failed to cover general operating expenses, and thus as the number of concerts grew so too did the aggregate deficit. Yet just as the guarantors’ three-year pledge of support was winding down, the orchestra received an unprecedented bequest from one of America’s wealthiest

¹¹⁴ Remember that Leifels was soon named acting manager of the Philharmonic, when Charlton’s contract was not renewed at the end of the 1911–12 season (6 March 1912, Box 606-01-02; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹¹⁵ In attendance at a board meeting on 14 December 1911 were Richard Arnold, Felix Leifels, A. Roebbelen, F. Ruhlender, H.P. Schmitt, A. Kalkhof, and A. Laurendeau. Stransky was an accomplished but relatively low profile conductor by European standards. Nevertheless, he received a three-year contract extension on 26 December 1911, and would remain the Philharmonic’s sole music director until 1921: “It was resolved that Mr. Stransky be engaged as conductor of the Philharmonic Society for a term of three years, succeeding the present season; the terms of his contract to be the same as his present contract, with the following exceptions: His salary during the term of the new contract to be \$20,000 each year; his expenses while traveling with the orchestra to be paid for at the rate of \$15 per day and his baggage to be transported to and from the ship on his arrival and departure each season” (minutes from 26 December 1911 board meeting, Box 606-01-02/19; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹¹⁶ With the drastic increase of orchestral performances in New York, one might say that the supply concerts had outpaced audience demand. This phenomenon forced Philharmonic leaders to be creative in their pursuit of a full house, going so far as to distribute free tickets to the public: “The sub-committee [on advertising] is of the opinion that indiscriminate “papering” will defeat its own object and that a more careful and more methodical way for the distribution of the tickets should be devised, that all tickets should be handled through the managers office, and that the manager regularly submit a report as to the parties into whose hands the tickets pass ultimately” (quoted from board meeting minutes, 9 January 1912, *Ibid.*).

men. Publishing tycoon and philanthropist Joseph Pulitzer died on 29 October 1911 and six weeks later the Philharmonic's board announced his gift of \$1 million, although much of New York had known about Pulitzer's philanthropic intentions for at least a year.¹¹⁷ In a confidential letter to his own newspaper offices written sometime in 1908, Pulitzer expressed with characteristic candor his interest in the orchestra's organization and administration: "I want a report on the Philharmonic Society, not as it is superficially, nominally, and apparently, but who really runs it.... I want this very brief, but reliable; from the inside, not the outside."¹¹⁸

Although Pulitzer had supported the orchestra in the past, he had done so in moderation, and thus his bequest must have come as a surprise for many. The gift came in two parts. The first, written into Pulitzer's will on 23 March 1909, consisted of up to \$500,000 and set out to "place [the orchestra] on a more independent basis and ... increase the number of concerts to be given in New York, which ... will not have too severely classical programs and [will be offered] to the public at reduced rates."¹¹⁹ He also suggested that the Philharmonic might honor his memory by programming his three favorite composers. It seems as though orchestra leaders took Pulitzer's requests to heart, instituting a series of Saturday night concerts at "popular prices" in 1914–15 and programming Wagner, Beethoven, and Liszt more often than almost any other composer throughout the 1910s.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Pulitzer's two-part bequest had been reported in all of the city's papers, and the Philharmonic's board became aware of Pulitzer's intentions during Mahler's tenure the previous season.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in an article written to commemorate Pulitzer's centennial (Arthur Judson, "Pulitzer Centennial," *St. Louis Dispatch*, 6 April 1947).

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Annual Meeting Minutes, 16 March 1912, Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic.

¹²⁰ During Stransky's tenure, the Philharmonic played Wagner more often than any other composer (996 times), followed by Tchaikovsky (416), Beethoven (317), and Liszt (237) (programming data reproduced in

Pulitzer's second bequest, also for \$500,000, dictated that the Philharmonic become "a membership corporation under the laws of New York, representing the general public, with a membership of not less than one thousand paying dues," thus cementing the orchestra's structural transformation from a cooperative to a board-governed institution.¹²¹ Members of the orchestra's board met in February and March of 1912 to discuss the details of the bequest and draft a new set of by-laws that met Pulitzer's conditions, augmenting the number of directors from ten to twelve.¹²² The subtext of Pulitzer's gift suggests a continued shift away from the artist and toward the audience, marking the Philharmonic's broader adoption of a nonprofit ideology, dedicated to the education of a broader public.

It was the wealthy patron, however, who maintained control over the orchestra through the subsidy of its mission. The Philharmonic's newly amended by-laws reflect this ever-growing distinction between musical and non-musical members. Four new categories emerged: Musical, Annual, Sustaining, and Honorary Associate members.¹²³ Non-musicians were elected by the board of directors and asked to pay a minimum of \$10 each year, while those who contributed more than \$1,000 were granted special

John Erskine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), Appendix).

¹²¹ Interestingly, the membership corporation laws of early-twentieth-century New York required that the Philharmonic not distribute stock or overlap with existing insurance law. These restrictions required the orchestra to do away with its pension fund and change its mission statement, which had previously included "the relief of distressed actual members, their widows and children" and thus conflicted with the Insurance Law of 1895 (Annual Meeting Minutes, 16 March 1912, Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹²² The board of directors met to discuss the specifics of Pulitzer's bequest on 28 February 1912, and the membership voted to adopt a new set of by-laws drafted by a committee of five musicians on March 16. Perhaps not surprisingly, Anthony Reiff, Jr., who represented the Philharmonic's old guard, tendered his resignation from the committee shortly thereafter (Box 606-01-02/19; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹²³ Article II, Section 2 through 5, Amended By-Laws of the New York Philharmonic, 16 March 1912.

privileges and responsibilities (see Figure 2.5).¹²⁴ The orchestra's most generous donors could "appoint by will or other writing a successor or successors to himself, one successor for each ten thousand dollars of his contribution, and each successor may appoint one person to succeed himself."¹²⁵ This sort of "grandfather clause" afforded generations of wealthy Americans insider access to the Philharmonic, ensuring a hierarchy of haves and have-nots that in some quarters has yet to be erased. The empowerment of the few also meant the continued marginalization of the Philharmonic musicians. The new by-laws mandated that only three of the twelve directors be musical members, and by 1928, musicians on the board were outnumbered six to one.¹²⁶

With these new regulations in place and the promise of Pulitzer's gift in hand, the Philharmonic continued to grow its operations and plan a new season of concerts. Unfortunately, the monies from the bequest had still not been transferred to the orchestra, owing to the fact that the Philharmonic had yet to prove to the executors of Pulitzer's estate that his conditions had been met. The process was further exacerbated by Mrs. Edith Moore, who had been personally named in Pulitzer's will and demanded further remuneration from three institutional beneficiaries of the tycoon's estate: the

¹²⁴ Annual members were divided into three classes with dues of \$10 (first class), \$25 (second class), and \$50 (third class), while Sustaining members were known either as a "Fellow for Life (at least \$1,000), "Fellow in Perpetuity" (at least \$10,000), or "Patrons" (at least \$50,000) (Box 004-11-40; Folder: Pulitzer Bequest: classes of membership; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹²⁵ Amended By-Laws, Article III, Section I, 16 March 1912.

¹²⁶ In 1912, 98 Sustaining Members were elected, along with the following directors: Richard Arnold (musical), Arthur Curtiss James, Ralph Pulitzer, Mary R. Sheldon, Felix F. Leifels (musical), Otto T. Bannard, Harriet C. Cheney, Rudolf E.F. Flinsch, Henry Schmitt (musical), Annie B. Jennings, Nelson S. Spencer, and Hector W. Thomas (Box 004-11-40; Folder: Pulitzer Bequest: classes of membership; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

Figure 2.5 Memorandum detailing the Philharmonic's new membership scheme (courtesy of the Philharmonic archives)

Memorandum

REGARDING

The Philharmonic Society of New York

March 1st, 1912

During the last three years the concerts of the Society were made possible through the public spirit of a number of Guarantors, who contributed about \$85,000 per annum towards meeting the excess of expenditures over receipts, which an undertaking of this character necessarily involves. This guarantee fund has now expired.

Under their contract with the Society, the Guarantors, through their Committee, controlled its affairs and practically ran the business. During the period mentioned, the receipts have increased very materially, whilst it has been possible to slightly decrease the expenditures. It is believed that expenses cannot be reduced any more, and that further improvement in receipts may confidently be expected; but even if every seat at every concert in New York and Brooklyn were sold, there would still remain every season a very large, unavoidable shortage. It seems also that the present number of 84 concerts in New York, Brooklyn, and on tour during the season of 23 weeks, marks the physical limit for first-class work.

A part of this annual shortage will in future be met by the revenue accruing to the Society out of the generous bequest of the late Joseph Pulitzer, which puts at the Society's disposal the revenue from a gift of \$500,000; this fund will ultimately probably amount to \$1,000,000, dependent upon the income during the next few years of a part of the testator's estate; the annual revenue accruing from this fund to the Society will therefore amount to about \$20,000 at the beginning, and eventually to about \$40,000; it will reduce the above-mentioned annual shortage to approximately \$50,000.

This latter sum will have to be raised by the Society either or partly by annual subscriptions, or by additional revenues accruing from an Endowment Fund.

The plans which have been prepared by the Guarantors' Committee and which have been approved by Mr. Pulitzer's executors, contemplate the enlargement of the present Philharmonic Society (now consisting exclusively of professional musicians) to a membership of at least 1,000, representing the general public, and paying annual dues.

Provision is also made for contributions to the Endowment Fund:

\$ 1,000 or more by "Fellows for Life."

\$10,000 or more by "Fellows in Perpetuity."

\$50,000 or more by "Patrons."

Regarding the "Annual Members," each paying not less than \$10 per annum, it is intended to offer them a ticket for each of two private concerts at the Waldorf-Astoria (or at some similar place), at which new or selected compositions in specially arranged programs, with soloists, will be performed by the Philharmonic Orchestra, before they are given at the regular public concerts.

GUARANTORS' COMMITTEE,

THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF NEW YORK.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Columbia University, and the Philharmonic Society.¹²⁷

Without Pulitzer's gift, the orchestra quickly found that it was spending much more than it could bring in, forcing the board to take out three lines of credit totaling more than \$50,000, including a personal loan from Mary Sheldon.¹²⁸ In fact, Sheldon would not live to see Pulitzer's promise become a reality. Shortly after her death on 16 June 1913 the Philharmonic defaulted on a \$30,000 loan, and a small committee was formed to approach the executors of Pulitzer's estate and see if the bequest could "be expedited in any way."¹²⁹

The orchestra did finally receive the bulk of Pulitzer's gift—\$875,000—in November of 1913, although \$100,000 had to be paid directly to Edith Moore per the agreement outlined above. Yet while the size of Pulitzer's gift hastened the Philharmonic's reorganization efforts and helped it to form one of the first permanent endowments of any American orchestra, at least half of the funds were restricted. In fact, the orchestra could only access \$20,000–\$40,000 in interest each year, which did not

¹²⁷ According to a letter dated 3 May 1913 written by Nelson Spencer, special counsel for the Philharmonic, "Mrs. Moore demands that her income be increased to \$50,000 and a payment of \$300,000 out of the principal of the estate. The difference between the income of her trust under the will and what she demands, some \$22,000 a year, is to be provided by the members of the family out of their incomes. It is proposed that the principal payments shall be provided by a contribution of \$100,000 each by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Columbia University and the Philharmonic Society out of income directed to be paid to them under the trust established by the Sixth Clause of the first Codicil of the Will. . . . The Directors of the Philharmonic Society are disposed to accede to the provision under these circumstances, if no other reasonable method can be arranged for the adjustment of Mrs. Moore's demands. . . . They wish me, however, to point out to you [John Milburn, lawyer for Mrs. Moore] that the position of the Society is somewhat different from the other two specified beneficiaries, in large part because it is dependent upon receiving the bequests in their integrity, and has entered upon obligations in expectation of this receipt, which expectation it believed itself justified in entertaining by the course of events since Mr. Pulitzer's death" (Box 606-01-02/19; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹²⁸ These included a \$30,000 six-month loan at 6% from Kissel, Kinnicutt & Co. (15 January 1913), a private loan from Sheldon (5 February 1913), and another \$10,000 loan on 26 March 1913 (Ibid.).

¹²⁹ According to minutes from a board of directors meeting on 9 September 1913, "Mr. Flinsch and Mr. Cooper agreed to act as a committee of two to visit Mr. Hornblower and Mr. Ralph Pulitzer for the purpose of ascertaining if the Pulitzer bequest may be expedited in any way" (Ibid.).

Figure 2.6 Disbursement of Pulitzer’s Bequest (courtesy of the Philharmonic archives)¹³⁰

Date	Amount
November 1913	\$775,000
December 1914	\$50,000
February 1916	\$919.01
March 1916	\$1,073.44
August 1916	\$60,410.05
TOTAL:	\$887,402.50

come close to meeting the organization’s annual deficit. In an unprecedented and previously unreported move, the Philharmonic board hired Charles Norman Fay to serve as an executive consultant.¹³¹ Fay, who was well known in the orchestra world as the patron who had recruited Theodore Thomas to Chicago and spearheaded the establishment of a permanent orchestra there, was to secure at least \$30,000 in donations for both the Philharmonic’s endowment and a new building fund. This development has to my knowledge never been discussed in the scholarly literature, which is especially surprising considering Fay’s unique role in creating the first permanent orchestra on the corporate model. In a proposed letter to subscribers, Fay outlined his strategy, which hinged on a new hall built especially for the Philharmonic:

In ... other cities, particularly in Boston and Chicago, their Orchestras have been established upon a firm and permanent financial basis. In the case of the Boston Orchestra, its audiences are limited only by the size of its hall, and its large annual deficit is met by the public-spirited generosity of Mr. Higginson; in the case of the Chicago Orchestra, it is able to meet its expenses only by the ownership of and income from its own Concert

¹³⁰ It is worthwhile to note that the 1922 balance of the Pulitzer Fund was only \$521,849.34, suggesting that the Philharmonic’s board was drawing from the fund’s principal and thus violating the terms of Pulitzer’s bequest (Miscellaneous: Clarence Mackay Papers, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹³¹ Fay’s appointment was announced in a 18 February 1914 letter to the board, which detailed the stipulations of his contract: \$500 per month starting immediately (Box 606-01-02/19; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

Hall. It is quite shameful that New York, with its greater possibilities, has not long since done as much for its premier Orchestra.¹³²

It is not clear how committed the Philharmonic was to Fay's vision, but on 24 April 1914 the board abruptly terminated his contract and shelved plans for a new concert hall.¹³³

The challenges associated with the administration of the Pulitzer Fund serve to highlight the ever-present tension between the Philharmonic's artistic vision and its day-to-day operations. *Times* critic Richard Aldrich proclaimed that "there are difficulties and dangers which even a sufficient endowment will not succeed in avoiding. These difficulties and dangers are almost insuperable from the control of such an enterprise by a committee of laymen or women."¹³⁴ Yet by 1917, the Philharmonic's twenty-member board of directors consisted almost entirely of "laymen or women" who underwrote the orchestra's increasingly heavy concert load, which had more than quadrupled since 1908. In his 75th-anniversary address to the Philharmonic's members, the board's president noted that

There has been nothing to indicate to the trustees any dissatisfaction among the membership.... Are we not bound to believe that if there were a widespread impression, outside of the columns of a certain newspaper, that your directors are either incompetent or deliberately betraying the Society's musical ideals, we should have heard from our membership at length and with frequency? We have received no such protests.... This is a democratic society and its officers desire nothing so much as to stimulate the membership to take a greater hand in the management of the Society.¹³⁵

¹³² Quoted in the board meeting minutes, 7 April 1914 (Ibid.).

¹³³ Board meeting minutes, 24 April 1914 (Ibid.).

¹³⁴ Richard Aldrich, "The Pulitzer Gift to the Philharmonic and What It May Accomplish," *The New York Times*, 19 Nov. 1911, X7.

¹³⁵ The paper singled out here is likely a reference to Henry Krehbiel's *New York Tribune* (quoted in Annual Meeting minutes, 2 April 1917, Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

While we cannot know for certain the degree of symbiosis felt between the Philharmonic's board and its musicians, the above excerpt's defensive posture suggests that the orchestra's reorganization had come at a cost.

Acquiring the Competition, 1921–28

The rise of contentious labor relations between union musicians and management was not unique to New York, and might be understood as an inevitable byproduct of the orchestra industry's continued professionalization. The Philharmonic had come a long way since its first reorganization attempts in 1902, but the orchestra still faced considerable competition from other local performing arts organizations. To quell any doubts concerning its status atop New York's orchestral scene, the Philharmonic set out to dismantle its competition. Although terms such as "merger," "acquisition," and "hostile takeover" are usually saved for conversations devoted to the manufacturing and finance industries, these and other techniques were used by the Philharmonic to corner the city's musical market and obtain new institutional support networks (i.e. donors and ticket buyers) so that they might fulfill their artistic ambitions.¹³⁶

The competition facing the Philharmonic included not only its long-standing rival, the New York Symphony Society, but also the fledgling National Symphony, which was founded in 1919 and sponsored by Adolph Lewisohn and Clarence Mackay. Originally called the "New Symphony Orchestra of the Musicians," the orchestra devoted its first season to performances of contemporary music under the direction of composer Edgard Varèse. With lackluster audience support, however, Mackay hired conductor Willem

¹³⁶ For a fascinating study of how organizations use the merger process to better future performance and create new institutional identities, see Shawn M. Clark, Dennis A. Gioia, David J. Ketchen, Jr., and James B. Thomas, "Transitional Identity as a Facilitator of Organizational Identity Change during a Merger," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 55, No. 3 (September 2010), 397–438.

Mengelberg to replace Varèse in 1920. Mengelberg was one of Europe's most well respected maestros, and his appointment captured the attention of New York's listening public. After the 1920–21 season, the Philharmonic board approached the National Symphony and offered to buy out Mengelberg's contract, enticing the conductor and some of his best musicians to join forces with New York's oldest orchestra.¹³⁷ During the 1921–22 season Mengelberg split conducting duties with Stransky, but the latter quickly realized he was outmatched by the fiery Dutchman; Stransky's contract was not renewed.¹³⁸

The greatest asset acquired from the National Symphony, however, may have been Mackay himself. A former president of the Postal Telegraph Company, Mackay's longtime support of New York's art scene would now be focused toward the Philharmonic.¹³⁹ Upon joining the board, Mackay was named Chairman—a post he would hold until 1938—and he brought with him a handful of wealthy bankers and businessmen who would infuse the orchestra with new money and leadership well into the mid-twentieth century.¹⁴⁰ Despite Mackay's influence, however, not all of the orchestra's constituents were pleased with the merger. Over the course of the next three years, Mengelberg replaced nearly half of the Philharmonic's original musicians, and

¹³⁷ Official letterhead from the 1921–22 season introduces the orchestra as “The Philharmonic Society of New York, Founded 1842, Merged 1921 with the National Symphony” (Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹³⁸ On 8 February 1923, the Philharmonic's executive committee chose not to renew Stransky's contract, choosing instead to “reward” the conductor with a \$15,000 gift for his “loyal efforts” as music director, although one might instead interpret the payment as a form of hush money (Box 606-01-14; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹³⁹ In addition to being a well-known cultural philanthropist, Mackay also had a daughter, Ellin, who would later marry songwriter Irving Berlin (Mackay famously opposed the union).

¹⁴⁰ Bankers Otto Kahn and Alvin Krech joined the Philharmonic board as vice presidents, and Mackay would later convince Frederic Juilliard and Marshall Field to serve as directors. Mrs. Lytle Hull (of the Astor family) also joined the Philharmonic in 1921, forming an Advisory Committee that would later serve as the basis of an all-female Auxiliary Board that fundraised on behalf of the orchestra.

“despite the increased receipts, the income of the Society ... [was] still far below its cost of maintenance,” with ticket sales covering less than 60% of the annual budget.¹⁴¹ Arthur Judson was hired to succeed Felix Leifels as manager and executive secretary in 1922, representing perhaps the final step in appropriating administrative power from the old Philharmonic musicians. With Judson at the helm, the orchestra acquired yet another one of its competitors in May 1923—The City Symphony, which had been formed the year prior by Senator Coleman DuPont.¹⁴² Unlike its earlier merger with the National Symphony, however, the Philharmonic “would not take over the orchestra personnel, conductor, or other employees of the City Symphony, and would not assume any of its debts,” wisely procuring only the group’s most promising financial backers and its unique audience base.¹⁴³

Judson, along with Mackay, played a pivotal role in shaping the new Philharmonic. A professional arts administrator with prior orchestra (Philadelphia Orchestra) and artist management experience, Judson was a notoriously imposing figure, and his vision for the Philharmonic included bringing the world’s best conductors—Mengelberg, Arturo Toscanini, and Wilhelm Furtwängler—to New York. To attract Europe’s virtuoso conductors, however, the Philharmonic would first need to establish itself as the city’s best orchestra, and while many believed that the Philharmonic had earned that title long ago, some supporters of Walter Damrosch and his orchestra claimed otherwise. In truth, the Symphony Society had been in a state of decline since the early

¹⁴¹ Quoted from a letter to Philharmonic board members dated 30 March 1922 (Box 005-04-42; Folder: Papers of Charlie Triller; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁴² Under the baton of Dirk Fochl, the City Symphony gave fifty concerts during its first season, but total receipts barely exceeded \$21,000 (Shanet, *The Philharmonic*, 247).

¹⁴³ One of the most prominent backers of the City Symphony to join in supporting the Philharmonic was Mrs. Louise Ryals de Cravioto (Ibid., 248).

1920s, but Damrosch's connections to some of the city's most powerful men—including Andrew Carnegie and Henry Harkness Flagler—made him and his orchestra worthy adversaries. Yet despite the history of bad blood between the two ensembles, a merger had been suggested as early as 1910, sowing the seeds for what would in 1928 become the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York.¹⁴⁴

The concept of a merger between the city's two largest orchestras became an identifiable trope in the late 1910s and 1920s. Board member John D. Rockefeller, Jr. suggested that cooperation, rather than competition, would benefit both organizations,¹⁴⁵ and Arthur Judson initiated discussions with the Symphony Society's manager to combine the two orchestras' concert seasons as a means of minimizing overhead costs.¹⁴⁶ In the summer of 1926, Mackay met with Damrosch and Flagler to discuss the possibility of consolidation, as the two orchestras were "giving more concerts than the music loving public of New York could adequately support.... One consolidated orchestra could supply New York with all the concerts it requires in addition to those given by visiting orchestras."¹⁴⁷ At the request of Mackay and the Philharmonic board, Judson outlined the

¹⁴⁴ An anonymous author in *The Musical Courier* wondered, "Why not amalgamate the New York Symphony and Philharmonic and create a real permanent proposition to meet the tremendous operatic competition and put one of the Damrosches in, or both, as conductors." The reference to "both" Damrosch's refers to Walter and his brother Frank, who was also a conductor ("Reflections," *The Musical Courier* 61, no. 7, 17 August 1910, 5).

¹⁴⁵ Rockefeller, Jr. mentions the possibility of a merger in the context of a letter from Adolph Lewisohn, who was a staunch supporter of the Symphony Society before his involvement in founding the National Symphony. According to Rockefeller, "it would seem ... that Mr. Lewisohn would have done better to have sought cooperation at the outset with ... other orchestras, rather than competition" (Letter from Rockefeller, Jr. to Cooper, dated 26 August 1919, Box 004-11-48; Folder: Rockefeller Foundation; Record Group: Development, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁴⁶ In a letter to Clarence Mackay dated 23 March 1923, Judson discusses the possibility of merging seasons with the Symphony Society. He proposes keeping the orchestras' respective subscription series separate, include 13 weeks (61 concerts) for Damrosch and 12 weeks (41 concerts) for Mengelberg. The total estimated cost to the Philharmonic for its half of the season would be \$309,650 (Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁴⁷ Memorandum, "Tentative Suggestions for Consolidation," revised 7 and 13 July 1926, D-B Collection, Box 9, Library of Congress.

pros and cons of a merger with the Symphony Society in early 1927, indicating that “the tendency of critical opinion in the newspapers is definitely against the elimination of one of the two symphony orchestras.”¹⁴⁸

Despite these concerns, the boards of the Philharmonic and Symphony societies announced a merger between the two organizations on 26 March 1928, hoping that the ensuing consequences for both the orchestra and the city’s musical public would be more positive than negative.¹⁴⁹ According to the official announcement,

The boards of directors of the two societies have unanimously reached the conclusion that the cause of orchestral music in New York will be promoted by the consolidation of the two societies and the concentration of the efforts of the consolidated society upon the support of a single orchestra . . . Several considerations prompted this decision. One was the constantly mounting cost of giving orchestral concerts and the burden of the recurring task of raising the necessary money to provide for the deficits of the two orchestras . . . It is hoped that the combined efforts of the friends of both existing orchestras will eventually result in securing a sufficient endowment and pension fund to place the consolidated orchestra upon a sound basis as a permanent, self-supporting institution in no way dependent upon the success of periodical efforts to meet the deficits through voluntary contributions.¹⁵⁰

Combining the considerable resources of each orchestra, both artistic and economic, would go a long way in securing a permanent future for the new Philharmonic. Starting in the 1928–29 season, the orchestra’s board would consist of twenty-eight members, including seventeen directors from the Philharmonic and ten from the Symphony

¹⁴⁸ Judson articulates his opinions regarding a possible merger to Mackay in a letter marked “Personal and Confidential” on 21 January 1927. Despite his reservations, Judson found no overarching reason to dismiss the possibility of a permanent merger between the two orchestras (Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁴⁹ The announcement was made public in a multi-page article featured in the *New York Herald Tribune* the following day (“Symphony Merged with Philharmonic,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 March 1928).

¹⁵⁰ Official announcement of merger, 26 March 1928 (Miscellaneous: Clarence Mackay’s papers, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

Figure 2.7 Merger Proxy Form (courtesy of the Philharmonic archives)

Know All Men By These Presents, That I, the undersigned, who am a member of The Philharmonic Society of New York, and entitled to vote, do hereby consent to change the name of THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF NEW YORK to THE PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, and to increase the number of the members of the Board of Directors from twenty (20) to twenty-eight (28), and I hereby constitute and appoint Mr. Clarence H. Mackay or Mr. Charles Triller as my attorney, for me, and in my name, place and stead, to vote as my proxy at the special meeting of the members of The Philharmonic Society of New York called for the purpose of authorizing the execution and filing of certificates changing the name of the corporation and increasing the number of Directors accordingly, with full power of substitution, and also to vote as my proxy in favor of any action necessary or proper to effectuate such change of name and such increase in the number of Directors.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this.....day of.....1928.

In the presence of:

.....*Witness**Member*

Society.¹⁵¹ Only four of the twenty-eight directors were musicians. An executive committee and auxiliary board were also formed, and although both contained supporters of the original Philharmonic and the Symphony societies, those associated with the former represented the clear and powerful majority.¹⁵²

The only director of the Symphony Society not offered a seat on the Philharmonic’s board was Walter Damrosch, who had maintained complete artistic and

¹⁵¹ The officers included the following (position and original affiliation): Clarence Mackay (chairman, NYP), Harry Harkness Flagler (president, NYS), Frederick Juilliard (first vice president, NYP), Otto Kahn (VP, NYP), Marshall Field (VP, NYP), Paul Cravath (VP, NYS), Henry Seligman (VP, NYS), Charles Triller (treasurer, NYP), Richard Welling (honorary secretary, NYS), and Arthur Judson (Executive Secretary, NYP), among others. One director, Ernest F. Wagner, seemed to be a completely new addition, while John W. Davis had served as an associate director with the Symphony Society. The Philharmonic also maintained five trustees who were responsible for the orchestra’s material property and resources. All were original members of the Philharmonic: Marshall Field, Frederick Juilliard, Otto Kahn, Clarence Mackay, and Charles Triller (Ibid.).

¹⁵² The executive committee consisted of twelve directors (seven from the Philharmonic and five from the Symphony Society), and the auxiliary board was incorporated as a separate entity on 14 May 1929. Its expressed function was “to raise funds for the maintenance of The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, and for the furtherance of any other work in the cause of music in which The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York shall be engaged. It shall also assist in any and all other duties which may from time to time be allotted by the Board of directors of The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York” (By-Laws of the Auxiliary Board, Article 1, Sec. II, Box Number: 007-01-14; Folder Title: Auxiliary Board By-Laws; Record Group: Development, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

administrative control of his orchestra until the very end. With the new Philharmonic, Damrosch took a tertiary role behind Mengelberg and Arturo Toscanini, who had joined the orchestra in 1926 and quickly become its primary conductor.¹⁵³ Mackay and Judson invited Damrosch to conduct four subscription programs and a series of children's concerts in 1928–29, but the offer was not renewed. In what might be viewed as a symbolic shift in power, Damrosch was unable to convince the leaders of the Philharmonic to hire the Symphony's musicians without a formal audition. Instead, "the choice of players from both organizations ... [was] left in the hands of Mr. Toscanini," who went on to replace over half the orchestra, leaving only twenty-three musicians from the Symphony Society.¹⁵⁴ In his annual Chairman's Report, Mackay reflected on the merger, which was recognized by the State of New York on 8 June 1928 and resulted in a newly integrated organizational structure, a \$200,000 guarantee fund, and unprecedented artistic gains.¹⁵⁵ For those entrusted with the new Philharmonic-Symphony Society, the merger brought the group one step closer to its goal of being the world's best orchestra.¹⁵⁶

As has already been discussed, however, the Philharmonic's adoption of the modern nonprofit model failed to solve the fundamental economic challenges associated with live performance. Despite acquiring three of its competitors, the Philharmonic did not reach three times the number of listeners, nor did it become three times as profitable. On the contrary, the orchestra's institutional growth was driven in part by an increase in

¹⁵³ For the 1928–29 season, the Philharmonic board originally anticipated having Toscanini conduct 51 concerts, Mengelberg 44, Damrosch 24, Schelling 5, and Beecham 4 (Chairman's Report, 24 May 1928, Miscellaneous: Clarence Mackay's papers, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ According to Mackay, the new orchestra would have "a guaranty [sic] of \$200,000 a year for three years, \$75,000 to be subscribed by Mr. Flagler and his associates, and \$125,000 by the supporters of the Philharmonic Society" (*Ibid.*).

¹⁵⁶ Mackay outlines three primary goals for the newly-merged orchestra, which continues to carry the official designation "Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York": a new hall, an endowment that would amass \$100,000 or more in interest annually, and an adequate pension fund (*Ibid.*).

artistic and operating expenses. Between 1921 and 1928, the Philharmonic's budget grew from \$421,000 to over \$700,000, and although ticket sales covered a significant portion of expenses, such drastic expansion tested the philanthropic limits of what was still an elite circle of wealthy patrons.¹⁵⁷ The mentality undergirding the modern American orchestra seemed to suggest that bigger was better.¹⁵⁸ This is not to say that the Philharmonic failed to achieve what it set out to accomplish twenty-five years earlier. What was once a loose cooperative of musicians had become New York's finest musical ensemble. During the 1928–29 season, over 301,500 people attended the orchestra's 129 concerts—a statistic that was dwarfed by the orchestra's international radio audience.¹⁵⁹ Building on the work of Damrosch, Carnegie, Sheldon, and Mahler, the merger orchestrated by Mackay and Judson ensured that the Philharmonic would achieve its loftiest goal: permanence. From Mackay's perspective,

It [is] hardly necessary to mention the artistic success achieved during the season, for the fact that practically every concert was sold out to the entire seating capacity and almost always the entire standing room capacity, was sufficient indication that the high artistic standards of previous seasons had not only been maintained, but in a measure increased.... The orchestra as now existing is by far the best which the Society has ever had, and probably the best that New York has ever heard.¹⁶⁰

The orchestra's new organizational structure, adopted laboriously over two decades, succeeded in supporting the Philharmonic's extensive concert schedule and growing

¹⁵⁷ Data culled from Annual Reports, 1921–28, Archives of the New York Philharmonic, and the transcript of the Chairman's Report, 24 May 1928 (Miscellaneous: Clarence Mackay's papers, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁵⁸ One could argue that this mentality still exists today, as orchestras are grouped by—and in some circles ranked by—budget size (this is reflected in the actions of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians during their 2010–11 strike, in which they fought—and ultimately failed—to keep the orchestra's base salary in the “top ten” of American ensembles).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Quoted from Annual Meeting minutes, 2 April 1928 (Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

musician salaries, ultimately—and perhaps unexpectedly—aiding the institutionalization of high art in early twentieth-century America.

A Closer Look: Programming

To substantively connect this shift in organizational structure with artistic practice, one must first reflect on the Philharmonic's evolving programming strategies, which in turn reflected the increasingly fraught interactions between musician, conductor, board, and public. The most obvious trend during the reorganization period is a proliferation of concerts, both in and outside of New York. As outlined in Figure 2.8, the number of subscription concerts grew from 16 to 89 between 1900 and 1929, and these programs were augmented by yearly benefit concerts and a budding touring schedule that brought the orchestra to audiences across the country.¹⁶¹ In truth, the Philharmonic took the first steps toward becoming a global ambassador for orchestral music in April of 1901, when an amendment to the charter allowed the orchestra to present concerts outside of Manhattan for the first time.¹⁶² Touring became a significant part of the Philharmonic's artistic identity during Mahler's tenure.¹⁶³ In his first full season as music director, regional tours to Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Boston, Northampton, New Haven, Hartford, and Springfield were added, along with several new subscription series,

¹⁶¹ In 1928–29, 46 of the Philharmonic's 135 concerts—or roughly 34%—represented non-subscription events (Annual reports, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁶² “At any regularly called meeting, the Society may, by a vote of a majority of the members present, decide to give one or more Concerts beyond the limits of the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York.... The Board of Directors shall have authority to select the members of the Society ... who shall take part in such concerts.... The expenses of, and receipts from, such concerts shall be kept by the Treasurer entirely separate and distinct from the regular series of Rehearsals and Concerts” (Amendment to the by-laws, Article V, Sec. 8, 17 April 1901, Box 498-01-02; Folder: Minutes 1890–1903; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes for Business Meetings, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁶³ For a detailed discussion of the Philharmonic's touring schedule during Mahler's tenure as music director, see Mary H. Wagner, *Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra Tour America* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

Figure 2.8 NY Philharmonic Concerts, 1900–28 (courtesy of the Philharmonic archives)

Year	Concerts (total)	Concerts (Subscription)
1900-01	16	16*
1901-02	16	16*
1902-03	16	16*
1903-04	17	16*
1904-05	18	16*
1905-06	18	16
1906-07	20	16
1907-08	21	16
1908-09	18	16
1909-10	47	39
1910-11	66	50
1911-12	79	48
1912-13	83	51
1913-14	71	50
1914-15	81	52
1915-16	139	51
1916-17	90	58
1917-18	86	60
1918-19	84	60
1919-20	94	65
1920-21	147	54
1921-22	95	81
1922-23	101	90
1923-24	110	82
1924-25	113	84
1925-26	117	76
1926-27	122	64
1927-28	129	85

* half of these concerts were billed as “public rehearsals”

including a “historical” cycle on Wednesday evenings, a Beethoven cycle on Friday afternoons, and four popular Sunday afternoon concerts.¹⁶⁴ Although this expansion in performance output was an integral part of the guarantors’ plan for reorganization, it appears as though the thematic organization of repertoire was Mahler’s doing.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Marvin Lee Von Deck, “Mahler In New York: His Conducting Activities in New York City, 1908–11,” (dissertation, NYU School of Education, 1973), 146.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

The orchestra's new scheme of producing as many concerts as possible can be explained not by changes in demand, but by a desire to increase ticket revenue and keep musicians employed by a single ensemble year-round. The guarantors and other supporters of the orchestra saw these as necessary prerequisites in their fight to build demand and a broader appreciation for orchestral music in New York. According to the Philharmonic's then-manager, Loudon Charlton,

The working out of a new and broad scheme ... is a managerial problem of great interest. Evidence of our ultimate success in this direction is already apparent, and the one thing which we are now directly aiming for is to put the Philharmonic next season on a basis of one hundred concerts a year, which will permit it to be self-supporting.¹⁶⁶

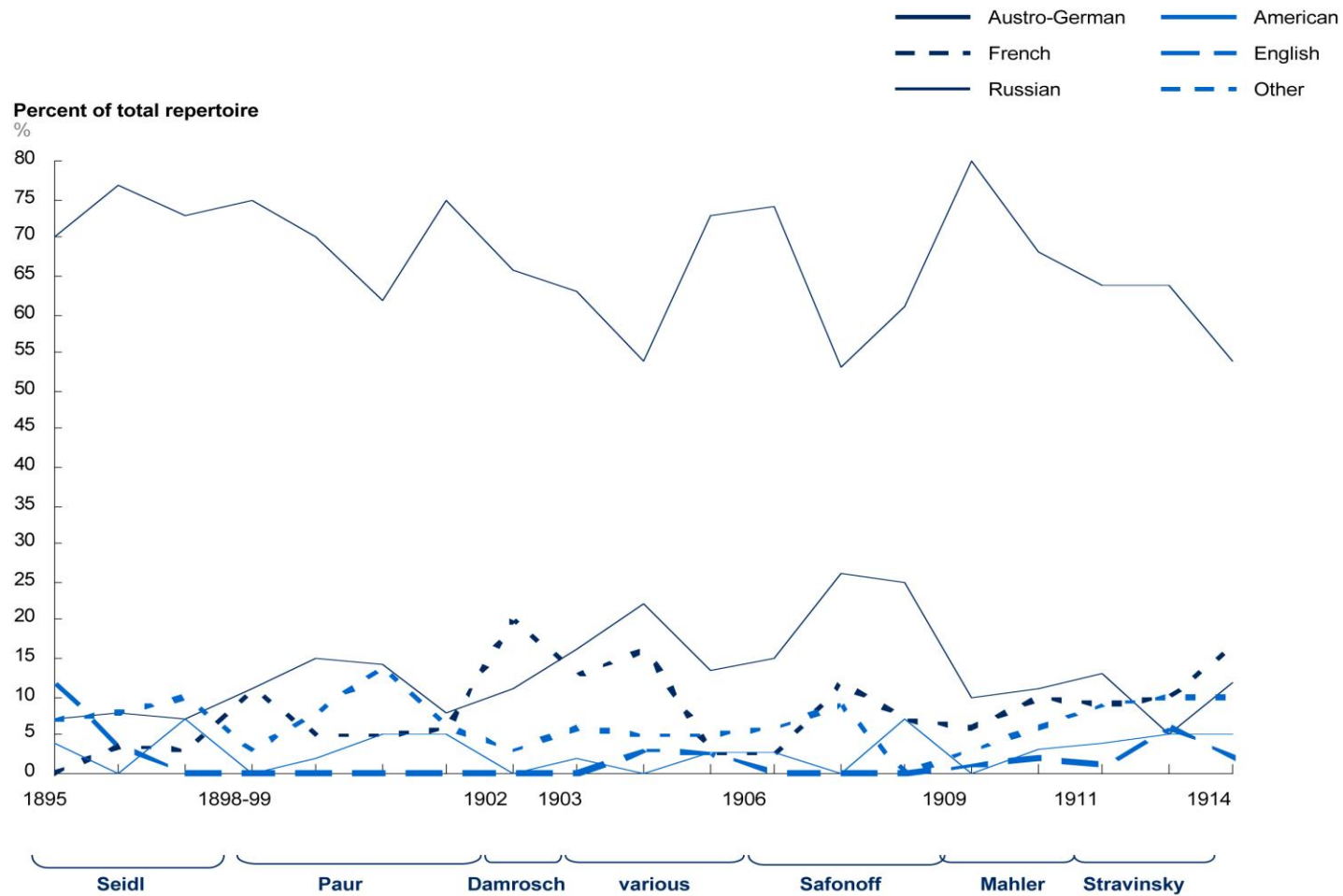
When the Philharmonic finally surpassed the 100-concert mark in 1915–16, the orchestra had come no closer to achieving self-sustainability through ticket sales.

By the same token, the orchestra's rapid growth had little effect on the variability of its programming practices. Figure 2.9 details the Philharmonic's repertoire by composer nationality between 1895 and 1914—the years central to the orchestra's reorganization.¹⁶⁷ Perhaps the most obvious trend is the dominance of Austro-German repertoire, which makes up between 50–80% of the orchestra's total programming. Not surprisingly, the performance of German music begins to fall off before World War I, and Russian music is championed most ardently during the tenure of Wassily Safonoff, a Russian expatriate. The Philharmonic's programming became slightly more heterogeneous after 1908–09, including a brief swell in the performance of American music, but such changes in variability can likely be explained by the increased volume of

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in *The Musical Courier*, 8 October 1910.

¹⁶⁷ The data represented in this graph comes from the Philharmonic's annual reports and the appendices of Huneker, *The Philharmonic Society of New York* and Erskine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York*.

Figure 2.9 New York Philharmonic Programming Trends, 1895–1914



performances in general. Indeed, the Philharmonic's shift in organizational structure seems to have had little impact on programming practices or innovations, as the vast majority of works performed continued to be drawn from the late-eighteenth to late-nineteenth centuries. In the decade before its reorganization, the orchestra produced five world premieres; in the decade following, it produced only six.

It should come as no surprise that the Philharmonic's programming remained conservative. For example, although Anton Seidl's cultivation of Wagner helped to develop audience's taste for chromatic music of the late-nineteenth century, it would take nearly thirty years for Brahms' symphonic music to enter the Philharmonic's canon.¹⁶⁸ If we take a closer look at the most-often performed repertoire around the time of the orchestra's reorganization, we find a story of three composers. As shown in Figure 2.10, the musical works of Wagner, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky pervaded the orchestra's programming throughout the early part of the century, although performances of the latter fell off during Toscanini's reign as music director.¹⁶⁹ Mahler complemented familiar works by these and other composers with those of the distant past (Bach) and the present day (Strauss).¹⁷⁰ Of all of the Philharmonic's conductors between 1900 and 1930,

¹⁶⁸ It is worthwhile to note that Walter Damrosch's Symphony Society was known as the more progressive of the two orchestras, though his performances were often criticized for their lack of preparation and artistic merit. According to Damrosch's biographer, George Martin, "The Philharmonic had the more subtle conductor [in Seidl]; the New York Symphony, the more adventurous programming" (Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty*, 169).

¹⁶⁹ For a more detailed breakdown of the Philharmonic's repertoire during Toscanini's notoriously conservative tenure, see Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra*, 68).

¹⁷⁰ Bach and Strauss were the third and fourth most-performed composers between 1909 and 1911, receiving twenty-two and twenty performances, respectively. Strauss's tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel* was a particular favorite, receiving ten performances in 1909–10 alone. Mahler also introduced Philharmonic audiences to his own music (eight times over the course of two seasons), although such performances were almost always received with mixed or negative reviews. After his first season, Mahler confessed to the press that he had "made no plans as yet for my concerts for next season, [but] I shall divide the programmes more or less evenly between the classic and the modern schools, and I shall play good music of all nations.... I shall not play too many of my compositions here myself. That might be misunderstood. I prefer to bring out the newer works of other composers" (quoted in *The New York Times*, 30 March 1910).

Figure 2.10 Most Programmed Composers (total # of performances)

Safonoff	Mahler	Stransky	Mengelberg	Toscanini
Tchaikovsky (21)	Wagner (72)	Wagner (996)	Beethoven (117)	Wagner (232)
Beethoven (18)	Beethoven (47)	Tchaikovsky (416)	Wagner (96)	Beethoven (148)
Wagner (16)	Bach (22)	Beethoven (317)	Strauss (90)	Brahms (62)
Mendelssohn (10)	Strauss (20)	Liszt (237)	Tchaikovsky (87)	Mendelssohn (45)
Mozart (5)	Tchaikovsky (15)	Dvořák (179)	Berlioz (56)	Debussy (44)
Rubinstein (5)	Berlioz (14)	Strauss (164)	Brahms (54)	Bach (39)
Schumann (4)	Liszt (10)	Rimsky-Korsakov (131)	Bach (53)	Rossini (35)
Bach (3)	Schumann (10)	Saint-Saens (114)	Weber (38)	Strauss (32)
Berlioz (3)	Smetna (10)	Mendelssohn (112)	Liszt (32)	Mozart (31)
Schubert (3)	Mahler (8)	Schubert (111)	Mozart (29)	Haydn (28)

Mengelberg had the most progressive taste in repertoire, as evidenced by his seminal performances of Strauss, Stravinsky, and Mahler.

Yet even if the Philharmonic's programming was slowly becoming more balanced, any shift away from its focus on nineteenth-century masterworks would take far longer than its reorganization efforts. In the 1910s, Josef Stransky attempted to shape the listening habits of critics and audience members by introducing a number of recent American compositions, including those by Bingham, Chadwick, Foote, Hadley, Herbert, Kramer, MacDowell, Morris, Paine, Powell, Schelling, Whithorne, and Wilson.¹⁷¹ Stransky also pushed "to popularize the Philharmonic, initiating Young People's Concerts, orchestral lectures, Evening of Light Music ... and other innovative schemes" in line with the suggestions laid out by Pulitzer in his will.¹⁷² Such efforts did not go unnoticed by the general public, with at least one patron finding Stransky's programs "far more interesting than those of the Boston Symphony."¹⁷³ Despite this high praise, however, the Philharmonic's programming practices remained relatively consistent with those of other orchestras, and reflected the prevailing artistic ideology of the time.

It is not clear how much power the board of directors yielded in shaping the Philharmonic's programming. Stransky seemed especially prone to the influence of the orchestra's guarantors, who from time to time would request that he program certain

¹⁷¹ Mahler scholar De La Grange considers Stransky's programming "enormously varied" when compared to Mahler's, thanks in large part to the former's emphasis on "French, English, Russian, Czech, ... Scandinavian ... [and] American compositions (De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 1192).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 1192.

¹⁷³ Quoting A.R. Shattuck, a patron of both the Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony Orchestra whose letter of appreciation (dated 27 March 1916) was read during the Annual Meeting held on April 3rd of the same year (Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic). Benjamin Kohon, a former Philharmonic bassoonist, confided that Stransky "was a sort of society conductor, ... he catered to popular tastes; always a Tchaikovsky program and a Wagner program and a Beethoven program" (quoted in De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, 1217).

repertoire.¹⁷⁴ But he was not the only conductor to capitulate to critical or popular demand. In 1922–23, Mackay spearheaded a project he called “The Greater Americanization of the Philharmonic” in an attempt to foster nationalist pride through classical music. The board hired composer and conductor Henry Hadley with the expressed purpose of introducing audiences to contemporary American music on a more regular basis, including a new a series of low-priced concerts at Lewisohn Stadium.¹⁷⁵ Records suggest that Mackay and Judson were acutely aware of the Philharmonic’s potential as a shaper of public taste, going so far as to articulate their programming philosophy in a letter to Mengelberg:

[It is an] absolute necessity for the formation of a series of programs which will meet the requirements of the American public at a critical period in the existence of the Philharmonic Society, and the Executive Committee asks from Mr. Mengelberg, in accordance with the contract which is held with him, cooperation not only in fact but in spirit, and that his approval of the programs outlined, made by Mr. Judson, be cabled promptly on receipt of this letter....¹⁷⁶

While popular wisdom holds that conductors such as Mahler were autocratic in their choice of repertoire, the Philharmonic’s concert programming represented an ongoing negotiation between artist and patron.

Before the reorganization, the musician-led board of directors had the last word in all programming decisions. Richard Arnold and Felix Leifels engaged soloists and changed concert repertoire without the approval of Safonoff, privately scolding the

¹⁷⁴ According to the minutes from a 12 February 1913 board meeting, the Philharmonic’s executive committee sent Stransky a list of repertoire to consider for the following season, including symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Berlioz, Rachmaninoff, and Hadley (Box 606-01-02 through 19; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted from a letter drafted by Judson and shared at a 18 July 1923 board meeting (Box 606-01-02/19; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

conductor when he bought parts for and programmed a new work without their permission.¹⁷⁷ After the guarantors' rise to power, Mahler was formally entrusted with the Philharmonic's musical operations. Yet the organization's artistic chain of command was markedly more blurred in practice. In his first year as music director, Mahler himself realized that

Although I have a well-formed idea of the musical end I wish to reach I am not so particular about the methods of getting there that I am not open to suggestion. During the next few months I shall study the audiences of the Philharmonic with care. But I intend to let my public and the music critics of the press help me in picking out the musical way we should go.... The general aim of our concerts of the coming season will be to educate and for that reason I have formed several series... For the regular subscribers of previous years there will be the eclectic programs. The Beethoven cycle will be for the education of the lovers of classical music, for the education of my orchestra and for the students. The historical cycle ... also should have its interest.¹⁷⁸

Mahler's remarkable attentiveness to the expectations of not only his critics but his consumers is at odds with the picture so often painted by the popular press. There is nothing to substantiate the claims that his programs were maliciously shaped or altered by the guarantors' committee.¹⁷⁹ On the contrary, it seems as though Mahler was both aware and accepting of his role as the head of what was in some ways still very much a

¹⁷⁷ Board meeting minutes from 16 September 1908 (Box 498-01-03; Folder: Minutes 1903–12; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes of the Meetings of the Directors of the Philharmonic Society, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁷⁸ Note the new cycles Mahler programmed, including the historical cycle, which featured the conductor on continuo (*The Musical Courier* 59, no. 17, 27 October 1909, 20). Mahler stated similar goals in *The New York Times*, pointing out that "The symphonic concerts, in any community, form the musical structure on which the development of the people must stand ... Yet in my work here, I shall be governed to a large extent by the wishes of the public and the newspaper music critics" (*The New York Times*, 24 October 1909, 13).

¹⁷⁹ Upon learning of his illness in February 1911, the board requested that replacement conductor Theodore Spiering honor all of Mahler's repertoire choices. Nevertheless a newspaper editorial claimed that Mahler "had difficulty in making out his programmes this season, that in almost every instance his programmes have been changed for some reason or another by members of the Board of Directors" (*The New York Times*, 1 March 1911, 13). The Philharmonic's manager, Loudon Charlton, vehemently denied this in a subsequent interview, insisting that "Mr. Mahler and the management are now, and have been throughout the season, working in perfect harmony. There have been no differences as to the programmes or policy" (*The New York Times*, 13 March 1911, 9). The truth is likely somewhere in between.

cooperative, mediating lofty artistic ideals with the mundane economic realities of modern day concert production.¹⁸⁰

A Closer Look: Orchestra Economics and the Audience

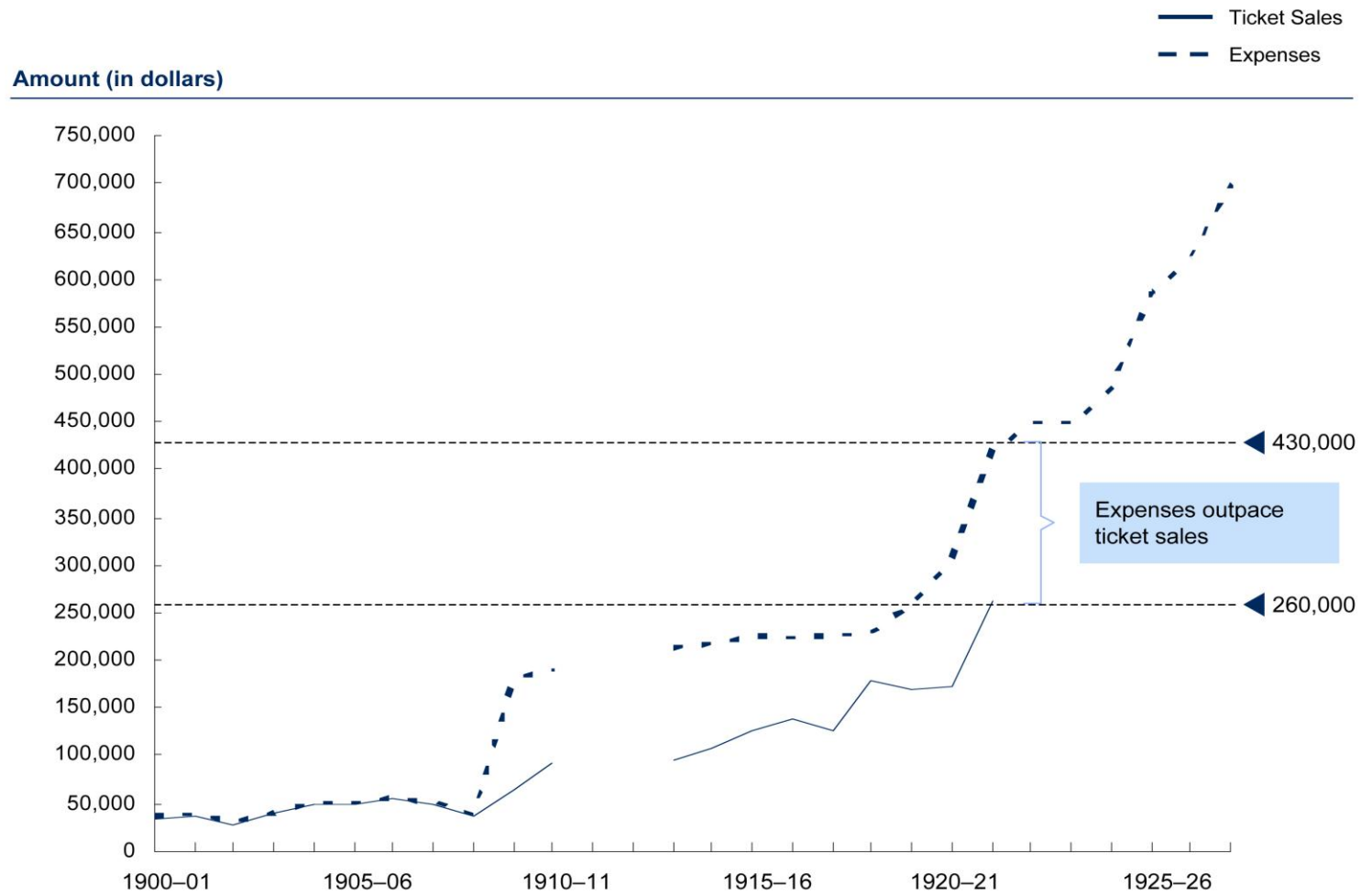
While it may be difficult to quantify changes to the Philharmonic's artistic landscape, it is far more straightforward to make financial comparisons. Figure 2.11 explicates us how the orchestra's shift to a corporate operating model led to dramatic organizational growth subsidized by a wealthy few.¹⁸¹ This data, pulled from the orchestra's annual reports and board meeting minutes, provides an unfettered glimpse at the Philharmonic's rapid expansion. One can clearly see how expenses and ticket sales closely mirror each other before the orchestra's reorganization, then drastically diverge. After a drop in revenue during the crisis of 1908–09, the Philharmonic experienced a burst of growth. The following season saw a 71% increase in ticket sales, accompanied by a 373% increase in expenditures. Members of the guarantors' committee happily filled the gap between these two measures, but the continued economic expansion inspired by Pulitzer's bequest and the acquisition of several local ensembles made it increasingly difficult for an elite group of philanthropists to foot the bill.¹⁸² As has already been

¹⁸⁰ One can get a sense of how and why the Philharmonic's administration influenced programming through the following story published in the *Tribune*. Upon hearing that Ovide Robillard (an enforcer of French copyright and leader of the Societe des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique) would soon insist that certain French works be licensed at a new and higher rate, Loudon Charlton "told Mr. Robillard that I would show him our next programme, and that if we could not reach an understanding I should simply eliminate all the disputed works." (quoted in *The New York Tribune*, 11 January 1911, 7).

¹⁸¹ Please note that no detailed financial records survive from 1911–12, and thus data is not included for those years. For another graphic representation of the Philharmonic's expansion, see Baumol and Bowen, *Performing Arts—The Economic Dilemma*, 185, which roughly traces the orchestra's expenses between 1843 and 1964. The authors attribute shifts in budget size to broader economic and political events such as the Great Depression and World War I and II, as opposed to the Philharmonic's reorganization.

¹⁸² As a restricted endowment fund, Pulitzer's bequest produced only \$20,000–\$40,000 in interest annually—a small fraction of the residual costs not covered by ticket sales.

Figure 2.11 The New York Philharmonic's Income Gap, 1900–28



mentioned, the remarkable financial growth surrounding the Philharmonic's reorganization was caused primarily by an increase in the number of concerts and newly instated salaries for conductor and musicians. Figure 2.12 outlines a partial breakdown of the orchestra's expenditures between 1900 and 1911.¹⁸³ Notable highlights include an increased dependence on substitute musicians in the years leading up to 1909, as well as fluctuations in the dividend received by performing members at the end of each season.¹⁸⁴ Following the reorganization, musician pay increased in absolute terms but decreased when corrected for the number of rehearsals and concerts performed. For instance, the \$266 dividend for the 1908–09 season translates into approximately \$5.90 per service, while the following season's base salary was set at approximately \$454, or \$4.13 per service.¹⁸⁵ The same phenomenon can be applied to conductor salaries, which increased twenty-fold between 1900 and 1910.¹⁸⁶ Given Mahler's grueling performance schedule, however, his per concert earnings equaled only \$353 in 1910–11—a twenty-percent pay cut from the previous season.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ This data comes directly from the Philharmonic's annual reports, with the exception of the 1909–10 season data, which is reported in a 7 December 1911 letter to the guarantors. Figures either do not exist for or are not applicable to those cells marked "N/A" (Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁸⁴ Remember that dividend payments took the place of musician salaries before reorganization, and were calculated as a percentage of the season's ticket sale surplus.

¹⁸⁵ Estimates for the 1908–09 season are calculated for eighteen concert performances (nine unique programs) and twenty-seven rehearsals (or three rehearsals per concert program), while the estimates for the 1909–10 season are calculated for 47 concerts (16 programs) and 64 rehearsals (or 4 rehearsals per concert program). The base salary for the 1909–10 season was actually set at \$7 per concert and \$2 per rehearsal, and thus the \$4.13 figure represents a weighted average. Union regulations soon increased the minimum salary to \$8 per concert and \$4 per rehearsal (*Musical America* 12, no. 21, 1 October 1910, 9).

¹⁸⁶ It is worthwhile to note that conductor salaries for the years 1903–09 were drawn from a special Conductors' Fund, and thus are not listed in the annual reports or board secretary's notebook.

¹⁸⁷ Mahler's contract for the 1910–11 season stipulated a salary of \$25,000, but he later requested an additional \$5,000 due to the proposed number of concerts. After arbitration, he was set to receive a salary of \$28,000—\$3,000 above his total 1909–10 compensation—but due to his early exit and eventual death, he never received the total amount.

Figure 2.12 Financial Comparison, 1900–11 (Courtesy of the Annual Reports, Philharmonic archives)

Year	Ticket Sales	Expenses	Dividend	Pension Fund	Conductor	Substitutes
1900-01	\$34,688.50	\$36,712.54	\$204	\$22,856.35	\$2,448	\$6,826
1901-02	\$35,620.75	\$38,336.17	\$200	\$23,547.99	\$2,500	\$6,742.50
1902-03	\$28,489.75	\$30,302.75	\$116	\$24,892.82	\$1,392	\$6,069
1903-04	\$38,661.25	\$40,722.95	\$204	\$25,862.77	N/A	\$7,242.50
1904-05	\$50,171.50	\$50,781.24	\$325.16	\$26,272.83	N/A	\$7,983
1905-06	\$49,740.75	\$50,681.52	\$303	\$26,892.32	N/A	\$8,871
1906-07	\$55,335.25	\$56,317.76	\$390	\$27,700.27	N/A	\$8,269
1907-08	\$49,614.75	\$50,846.38	\$301.70	\$28,541.87	N/A	\$8,683
1908-09	\$37,099.75	\$38,732.91	\$266	N/A	N/A	\$8,406.30
1909-10	\$63,323	\$183,136.41	N/A	N/A	\$25,000	N/A
1910-11	\$91,640	\$189,691.74	N/A	N/A	\$28,000	N/A

The Philharmonic's increasingly hectic concert schedule strained the musicians' artistic capacities as well, and any improvements to working conditions or compensation simply exacerbated the orchestra's cost structure.¹⁸⁸ By 1926, the orchestra boasted an annual deficit of nearly \$150,000, prompting the board of directors to launch a new campaign aimed at reestablishing the endowment and pension funds that had been depleted during the Philharmonic's reorganization.¹⁸⁹ The musicians' unanimous support for this initiative represented their continued shift from an ideological cooperative to a professionalized ensemble increasingly governed by union politics. Remember that, in 1902–03, the musicians had opposed Damrosch's call for a permanent endowment, insisting that such a measure went against the very tenets that the orchestra was founded upon. But things had changed, as "an increasing share of the Philharmonic's public ... was made up of that affluent class of ladies and gentlemen—especially ladies—that could afford to spend Friday afternoons at a concert, away from work or home."¹⁹⁰ High Society had staked its claim on the Philharmonic, and even though individual ticket

¹⁸⁸ According to a public memorandum drafted by the guarantors on 1 March 1912, "It is believed that expenses cannot be reduced any more, and that further improvements in receipts may confidently expected; but even if every seat at every concert in New York and Brooklyn were sold, there would remain every season a very large, unavoidable shortage. It seems also that the present number of 84 concerts ... marks the physical limit for first-class work." As has already been discussed, however, the orchestra would quickly exceed the 84-concert mark, thanks to extensive touring and a lengthened subscription season (Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁸⁹ The deficit (calculated as the difference between expenses and ticket revenue) grew to \$146,677 by the end of the 1925–26 season, and at the annual meeting held on 5 April 1926, a Mr. Manoly urged "that a campaign to establish both [an endowment and pension fund] should be launched at the earliest possible date. ... It was the unanimous opinion of the meeting that Mr. Manoly's arguments were sound and indisputable." By 1931, three pension accounts totaling more than \$135,000 were distributing funds to retired musicians, including the New York Philharmonic Fund, the New York Symphony Fund, and the Philharmonic–Symphony Fund (Annual Meeting minutes, 5 April 1926 and 6 April 1931, Box 498-01-01; Folder: Annual Meeting Minutes 1904–1932; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁹⁰ Shanet argues that these ladies "ensured their privilege by taking full-season subscriptions" for Friday afternoon concerts only, and thus cementing the Philharmonic's new weekly concert schedule. Friday afternoons remain a popular timeslot for orchestral concerts, and are often patronized by retired audience members (Shanet, *The Philharmonic*, 183).

prices were relatively affordable, the orchestra's most fervent supporters remained members of an elite sub-community.¹⁹¹ Such allegiances made it difficult for the Philharmonic to engage broader audiences, and likely played an important role in spurning some of the city's most powerful music critics.¹⁹²

Conclusions: Form Matches Function

In his summation of the Philharmonic's reorganization efforts, Howard Shanet paints a colorful picture that outlines the conflicting concerns of the orchestra's musicians, financiers, and audience. In his words,

Richard Arnold and his colleagues had waged a stirring but futile campaign to save their beloved cooperative society. They had tried everything that experience and ingenuity suggested.... But as long as their affairs were managed collectively by a membership that drifted in and out of their handful of concerts each year, while they earned their livings elsewhere, they could not compete with the big-business methods of the great subsidized orchestras that were being built by wealthy America.... After sixty-seven years, the cooperative society of professional musicians, democratically deciding who their conductor would be, what music they would play, where they would play it, and how much they would charge for the privilege of attendance at their performances, was to be converted into an orchestra hired and administered by a little group of wealthy citizens that undertook to support it as a public service.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ The cost of attending a Philharmonic concert in 1911–12 ranged from 38 cents to \$12.50, or approximately \$8.80 to \$290 in 2010 dollars—roughly in line with ticket prices today (inflation calculated using www.westegg.com). More work is needed to understand the historical trajectory of ticket pricing and its effects on concert attendance and audience demographics.

¹⁹² The relationship between the Philharmonic and the city's music critics, especially Henry Krehbiel of the *New York Tribune*, was notably volatile. Philharmonic musician and board member Anton Reiff, Jr. sent a letter to the *New York Herald* as early as 20 December 1904 to protest “the unfair treatment accorded the Society by the musical edition” of the paper (Box 498-01-03; Folder: Minutes 1903–12; Record Group: Board of Directors; Minutes of the Meetings of the Directors of the Philharmonic Society, Archives of the New York Philharmonic). The relationship between orchestra and critic reached a fevered pitch during Mahler's tenure in New York, a subject discussed at length by De La Grange, Martin, and Horowitz in their books on Mahler, Damrosch, and classical music in America, respectively. Krehbiel's personal vitriol against Mahler is most apparent in his lengthy obituary for the composer, which was published in the 21 May 1911 edition of the *New York Tribune* and was later opposed by a number of artists sympathetic to Mahler and his music, including the great pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch (“An Open Letter to the Music Critic of the *New York Tribune*,” *Musical America*, 21 October 1911).

¹⁹³ Shanet, *The Philharmonic*, 204.

Hyperbole aside, Shanet's vivid description alludes to the Philharmonic's ongoing struggle to match form with function, which propelled the orchestra's adoption of a new organizational structure that would better serve its mission: bringing art of the highest quality to as large a public as possible. To achieve this synergy between art, audience, and economics, Mary Sheldon and a group of guarantors took it upon themselves to govern and subsidize New York's first permanent orchestra.

In a January 1911 article published in *The New York Press*, critic Max Smith argued that "it was Gustav Mahler, and no one else, who reorganized and developed the Philharmonic orchestra."¹⁹⁴ Yet the process was far more complex, and depended on far more people, than Smith acknowledges. Influenced by the foresight of Walter Damrosch and the spectacular success of the Boston and Chicago Symphony Orchestras,¹⁹⁵ the guarantors worked with Mahler and musicians like Richard Arnold and Felix Leifels to reorganize the Philharmonic and assure its permanence.¹⁹⁶ The Philharmonic was certainly not the first major orchestra to encounter the challenges inherent to cooperative management, nor was it the first ensemble to adopt a corporate nonprofit operating model.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the interplay of patronage, organizational structure, and artistic

¹⁹⁴ Max Smith, untitled article in *The New York Press*, 16 January 1911.

¹⁹⁵ The Philharmonic's respect for (and jealousy of) the Boston Symphony Orchestra was fundamental to its reorganization efforts, at least for Mary Sheldon: "In our plans for the future we have tried to model the Philharmonic Orchestra on the plans of the Boston Symphony Orchestra" ("Mrs. George Sheldon Tell of Philharmonic Orchestra's Ideals," *Musical America* 13, 4 February 1911, 37).

¹⁹⁶ The trope of permanence remains central to the Philharmonic's executive management through at least the 1920s, when Clarence Mackay preached that "no orchestra can achieve real and lasting success until its permanency is assured" (underline his, Chairman's address, 30 October 1923, Box 606-01-15; Folder: Board of Directors and Executive Committee Minutes, 1911–28; Record Group: Board of Directors, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

¹⁹⁷ In his study of patronage and organizational structure in the orchestras of New York and London, sociologist Stephen R. Couch articulates the difficulties associated with cooperative management structures and argues that the cooperative structure of the London Symphony Orchestra has been maintained due to government subsidies and the lack of significant private support that could "offer the musicians a stable, year-round income in return for control of the orchestras." Couch also finds that, despite the diverging

practice in early-twentieth-century New York sheds some light on a remarkable process that was anything but smooth and congruous. The preceding pages argue that, by acknowledging these interactions, we can better understand the Philharmonic's history and the link between artistic and commercial practice more generally.

Although this chapter's discussion of the Philharmonic's reorganization concludes in 1928 with the merger of the Philharmonic and Symphony societies, the story does not end there. The legacy of the Pulitzer bequest continued to shape the orchestra's operations well into the middle of the century, both financially and organizationally. Extant letters and financial records suggest that the Philharmonic began draining the Pulitzer Fund to finance the orchestra's concerts, a fact that seems to have been investigated and later swept under the rug by Mackay and other senior board members.¹⁹⁸ And, although the orchestra's reorganization resulted in the formation of a membership corporation, such structural designations were later replaced by Non-Profit Corporation

structures of the New York Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestra, their respective programming strategies are practically identical (Stephen R. Couch, "Patronage and Organizational Structure in Symphony Orchestras in London and New York," 116).

¹⁹⁸ It is not clear who initiated illegal use of the fund, but Arthur Judson issues a strongly worded warning to Clarence Mackay in a private letter dated 3 February 1926. In it, he states "I believe that the Pulitzer Fund ought to be kept intact as an endowment and that the financing of current operations should be done entirely outside of this fund.... I trust that you will understand my position in the matter. From time to time, you have called upon me as the manager for a statement as to the condition of this Fund and you have many times expressed to me your wish that this Fund be kept intact. In spite of this, upon every occasion, which I have been requested to furnish a report, that report has show the Fund to be either depleted in smaller or larger amounts or to be partially invested and partially in cash. It has also shown that the Fund, although a Trust Fund, is being used for the current financing of the Orchestra season." Nearly ten years later, Philharmonic treasurer and board member Charles Triller attempted to gain clarification regarding the orchestra's compliance with the terms laid out in Pulitzer's bequest. In a letter from the Spencer, Ordway & Wierum law firm dated 14 November 1934, Triller learned that "The will, itself, does not mention the Philharmonic Society. The first mention of it occurs in the First Codicil which contains two distinct provisions.... There were thus two distinct legacies—one unrestricted in its purpose and indefinite in amount but not to exceed \$500,000, the other fixed in amount and defined as to its purpose. Whether or not the Society has ever paid any attention to the distinction between the two legacies, I am uncertain.... The language of Mr. Pulitzer's \$500,000 bequest clearly intends keeping the principal intact and in my opinion the use of it to meet annually recurring deficits would be inconsistent with that intention" (Box 004-11-41; Folder: Pulitzer Bequest, 1911-57; Record Group: Development, Archives of the New York Philharmonic).

laws that would go on to mandate the modern governance structures of orchestras and most other performing arts organizations. Despite these developments, the Philharmonic has continuously maintained an active voting membership since 1912, making it unique among American orchestras.¹⁹⁹ Today, members have the right to attend annual meetings and vote to elect the orchestra's governing body; most decisions rendered by the board of directors, however, are not subject to the approval of the general membership.

The story of the Philharmonic's transformation from a musicians' cooperative to a board-governed institution reflects a broader shift in orchestral performance and its place in American cultural life. In an attempt to combat unfavorable economic conditions and ensure a future for the orchestra, supporters of the Philharmonic used new organizational forms and strategies to further professionalize the orchestra and foster a more polished artistic identity. The latter was accomplished both by cultivating higher performance standards and increasing engagement with the general public. The orchestra's reorganization may not have manifested any drastic variations in programming or performance practices, but it did parallel a gradual shift in the way the ensemble was packaged and marketed. The Philharmonic and its concerts filled a contested space that mediated the values and expectations of New York's cultural elite with the city's broader population. This process—reconciling the commercially possible with the artistically desirable—unfolded through the actions of Mary Sheldon and the guarantors' committee.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Sheldon was acutely aware of the role fiscal solvency played in cultivating artistic excellence:

¹⁹⁹ In 1956–57, the Philharmonic listed only 166 paying members, but as of 2010 the orchestra boasts more than 1000 members, each of whom pays a minimum annual fee of \$75 (New York Philharmonic 2010 990 form, accessed via www.Guidestar.com).

It has always been my intention and the intention of the committee working with me in taking hold of the Philharmonic Orchestra to provide an organization for New York and the entire country that would have as its ideal the giving of the best concerts that money could provide. Our idea was and is to have the organization on such a permanent basis that after I am dead, and all the men and women concerned now with the running of the orchestra have passed away, the organization will still continue and will develop its artistic ability still further.... You will understand then when an orchestra must make money ... it cannot have a high artistic standard.²⁰⁰

Despite the purported artistic gains achieved after the Philharmonic's reorganization, however, the urgency of its economic challenges did not wane. More concerts performed by better paid musicians meant more money lost. Sheldon herself recognized the paradox: "Whenever I hear of an orchestra making money I always wonder if it is not descending to the level of a circus, or something of that sort, because I know that an orchestra cannot, by any manner of means, produce an income great enough to pay expenses."²⁰¹ The evidence provided in this chapter suggests that, while it is difficult to reconcile artistic excellence with traditional definitions of financial success, it is not impossible. Yet focusing on economic measures alone fails to encapsulate the essence of orchestral performance and its real value to audiences past and present. Sheldon's reflections on the subject are again worth quoting in full:

America should be thoroughly awakened to the fact that money alone does not make a symphony orchestra.... What any symphony orchestra in New York or anywhere else needs [is] ... an ideal. It needs a clear, definite, practical artistic ideal, to which every person connected with the organizational shall subscribe.²⁰²

For the Philharmonic, this ideal is embodied in the orchestra's legacy as one of the world's most storied musical ensembles, an accomplishment that endures despite

²⁰⁰ "Mrs. George Sheldon Tell of Philharmonic Orchestra's Ideals," *Musical America* 13, 4 February 1911, 37.

²⁰¹ "Mrs. George Sheldon Tell of Philharmonic Orchestra's Ideals," *Musical America*, 13 (Feb. 4 1911), 37.

²⁰² Editorial, *Musical America* 13, no. 4, 22 April 1911, 18.

continued struggles to finance concerts and reach new audiences in New York and around the world.

Chapter Three

“Fighting the Good Fight”: The Louisville Orchestra New Music Project, 1948–58

Introduction

The symphony orchestra has long struggled to define its relationship to newly composed music, both as patron and presenter. This is particularly true in America, where the proportion of programming dedicated to works by living composers had declined considerably by the turn of the twentieth century.¹ More recently, contemporary scholars have suggested that the modern orchestra be embraced not for what it once was—a venue for music of the present—but for what it has increasingly become: a museum for great works of the past.² Yet many of the most remarkable moments in the history of the American orchestra have coincided with active commissioning projects that brought new works to audiences.

This chapter documents one such story—the Louisville Orchestra New Music Project (NMP)—and contends that artistic creation is unavoidably shaped by the economic and structural realities facing the modern orchestra. Beginning in 1948 and lasting for more than a decade, the NMP served as an international incubator for new music, introducing audiences to newly-commissioned works at the unprecedented rate of one piece per subscription concert—or roughly 30% of the orchestra’s annual

¹ John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1951).

² J. Peter Burkholder, “The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as Museum,” from *The Orchestra: A Collection of 23 Essays on its Origins and Transformations*, ed. by Joan Peyser (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2006): 409–32.

programming. The two men behind the project, politician Charles Farnsley and conductor Robert Whitney, worked tirelessly with patrons and funders to commission and premiere more than 100 new works—an accomplishment that dwarfed the efforts of even the most forward-thinking orchestras and commissioning projects, thrusting Louisville into the national spotlight. The program expanded in 1953 with a \$400,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and, starting the following year, the orchestra began recording each new work on its own independent label, First Edition.³

Whitney and Farnsley were concerned with more than just the performance of contemporary music, however. Their objective was to develop a product of lasting value—composers and their compositions—while transforming a resource-strapped regional orchestra into a financially stable ensemble of international stature.⁴ For Farnsley in particular, the composer not only symbolized “the forgotten man of music” but also embodied the orchestra’s opportunity to sell-out Carnegie Hall and, with any luck, achieve long-term stability. In some respects the strategy worked, as private foundations, individual patrons, and local government banded together to try and solve the problem of supporting new music. Yet upon closer inspection, the unique series of events outlined above affirm an inescapable tension between artistic experimentation and financial sustainability, exposing how structural and ideological barriers impact artistic choice—including programming decisions, composition styles, and public reception. While the NMP replaced expensive guest artists with new concert works that could be performed repeatedly, the orchestra continued to struggle financially, a struggle that

³ Although orchestra-owned labels have become relatively common place in the post-digital age, First Edition was to my knowledge the first such label in the United States.

⁴ And, by the end of the project, of international repute: see Joseph E. Potts, “Louisville Commissions,” *The Musical Times* 99, No. 1380 (Feb., 1958): 77-78.

simply intensified as the program wore on. As Louisville grappled with the economic realities of supporting new music, the orchestra's conservative traditions and weary audience proved to be stark barriers to widespread change. Despite a quickly growing presence on the national and international music scenes, the orchestra failed to garner the support of its own community. Just as the orchestra was experimenting with new music, so too was the audience, which at times felt alienated and ignored by the policies and practices of the NMP. Nevertheless, Whitney continued to commission new works and fought to inspire popular interest in contemporary orchestral music.

All of this suggests that, as with most untested innovations, the NMP encountered as many setbacks as it achieved victories, forcing the orchestra's board to continuously alter its funding and marketing strategies in an effort to address ongoing structural challenges. My aim here is to identify these challenges and posit the New Music Project as a prolonged and ultimately futile attempt at solving them. Calling upon material mined from the University of Louisville archives and conversations with current and former members of the orchestra's administration, I argue that the project's demise can be understood as a consequence of the tenuous relationship between high art and commercial viability.⁵ This relationship, negotiated by orchestra and community leaders and mediated by the organization's structure, will receive further explication below. By addressing these and other issues, this chapter sets straight the story surrounding the NMP, rendering it not as an inexplicable aberration but instead as a patchwork of artistic experiments that confront the fraught relationship between high art and commercial

⁵ Findings presented in this chapter come primarily from the two collections housed at the University of Louisville Archives, which I visited in June of 2010 and 2011: The Louisville Orchestra Collection (call nos. 1998-022 and 76-017) and Robert Whitney's personal papers.

success, new music and popular appeal.⁶ Such a stance reinforces the project's remarkable vision and the perseverance of its foremost advocates, while highlighting the role played by organizational structure in shaping artistic practice and reception.

Setting the Stage

Despite its reputation as a small southern city known more for horse racing than civic pride in the arts, Louisville has long served as a breeding ground for some of the country's most progressive social experiments, particularly in the realm of education. Patty Hill, a Louisville native best known for co-writing "Happy Birthday," designed what would later become the template for American kindergarten, and by the late-nineteenth century women's clubs flourished alongside a burgeoning arts and culture scene that included active choral, dance, and theatre societies. According to a brief history penned by Whitney himself, the first iteration of the Louisville Philharmonic Society gave its premiere concert on 3 December 1866 under the baton of Louis Hast, a local organist.⁷ Although historians do not often mention Louisville alongside the larger city centers of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco, it was in many ways their cultural equal.

Given Louisville's genuinely progressive history, it was no accident that the New Music Project developed there in the years following World War II. Yet while the scope of the orchestra's commitment to new music was remarkable, precedents did exist, both

⁶ Extant research on the NMP includes Jeanne Marie Belfy, "The commissioning project of the Louisville Orchestra, 1948–1958: A study of the history and music," PhD Thesis, University of Kentucky, 1986; Carole C. Birkhead, "The History of the Orchestra in Louisville," M.A. Thesis, University of Louisville, 1977; Sandra Lee Fralin, "The role of the Louisville Orchestra in the fostering of new music, 1947—1997," D.M.A. Thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000, which contains over 500 pages of appendices and serves as the inspiration for the May 2010 film documentary, *Music Makes the City*.

⁷ Described in an eight-party essay written by Robert Whitney and published to coincide with the orchestra's thirtieth anniversary in 1967 (reproduced in 1988–22, Box 1, Folder 7: Louisville Orchestra Collection, University of Louisville Archives).

in the form of other commissioning initiatives and through an emerging discourse concerning the relationship between art and society. Indeed, several of the cultural developments that took place in the first half of the twentieth century were instrumental in launching the NMP. By the 1930s, institutions had become increasingly aware of the correlation between aesthetic and function, as audiences voiced their dissatisfaction with some of the modernist trends that had come to the fore during the early part of the century. In 1934, composer, conductor, and writer Constant Lambert discussed the ensuing retreat of such “cerebral” or intellectual music. According to Lambert, “compared to the vertiginous ‘twenties,’ the ‘thirties’ [were] curiously static.”⁸ While such dichotomous comparisons are oversimplified, they represent a truism rooted in the contemporary perceptions of artists and critics. Even a slight move away from the complex experiments of the 1910s and 1920s might be seen as a reflection of the global economic and political climate, as well as a response to the “rapidly diminishing good will toward contemporary concert-hall composers on the part of the music-loving public.”⁹

This emphasis on an accessible or proto-populist musical style was certainly apparent in the programming of most major American orchestras, with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony, Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra all choosing to engage with only certain segments of the new music aesthetic.¹⁰ The latter’s connection to young

⁸ Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934): 5.

⁹ Jennifer DeLapp, “Speaking to Whom? Modernism, Middlebrow and Copland’s *Short Symphony*,” from *Copland Connotations: Studies and Interviews*, ed. by Peter Dickinson (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2002): 87.

¹⁰ See, for example, Leopold Stokowski’s *Music for All of Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943), which praises the popularization of orchestras and their musical offerings through recording and film.

composers and their music is particularly noteworthy, and is reflected through his connection to the Tanglewood Music Festival and the Koussevitzky Foundations, which provided institutional homes for the conductor's dedication to new music. In his nearly thirty years with the BSO, Koussevitzky conducted over sixty premieres, fostering strong personal relationships with the composers he commissioned, the upstart conductors he mentored, and the growing audience he and the orchestra entertained. Through his two foundations designed "to encourage contemporary composers and provide them with opportunities to create new works," Koussevitzky went even further, ensuring an endowment for the creation of contemporary music that continues to this day.¹¹ Since their establishment in 1942, the foundations have served as one of the oldest and foremost commissioning initiatives in America, shaping a generation of symphonic music and inspiring other organizations—including the Louisville Orchestra—to support living composers.

Any relationship between new music and the American public was further addressed by the adoption of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal policies during the Depression, which encouraged artists of all types to reassert their connections with a mass audience. The Works Progress Administration, inaugurated in 1935, launched an ambitious scheme of arts-based programs in cities across the nation, including the Federal Music Project (FMP).¹² Under the leadership of Nikolai Sokoloff, former conductor of

¹¹ Between 1942 and 2010, 372 works have been commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundations and premiered by orchestras and chamber music organizations from around the world. All information concerning the Koussevitzky Foundations comes from a conversation with Catherine Rivers, Library of Congress (30 August 2010).

¹² Although government support for the arts had little or no precedent in the U.S. prior to the 1930s, a much longer history of public subsidy exists in Europe. For an example of how the French government influenced concert societies' programming practices through public subsidy during and after World War I, see Jane Fulcher, *The Composer As Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the Cleveland Orchestra, the FMP dispensed tens of millions of dollars into the American music scene, provided jobs to unemployed musicians, and “lifted the country’s musical IQ” through a steady diet of classical warhorses and audience-pleasers.¹³ Indeed, the FMP hoped that if the general public regularly heard quality musical performances featuring American musicians, their patronage of the arts—especially those created and practiced in the United States—would increase after the Depression lifted. Such tactics continued to resonate into the 1950s as Cold War politics took root, and thus Louisville’s New Music Project might be understood more broadly as an effective channel for cultural diplomacy.

Yet the work carried out under Roosevelt’s new cultural policies had an even more direct impact on the emergence of the NMP. By the mid-1930s, the Composer’s Forum Laboratory had become one of the FMP’s most impressive programs. In the words of director Ashley Pettis, the Forum was created to develop “a more definite understanding and relationship between the composer and the public”—a mission accomplished through the performance of over 6,500 new works by American composers.¹⁴ Although the Forum was centered in New York City, the impetus behind its establishment quickly permeated the country entire country. In Chicago, an upstart conductor was hired to be supervisor of the city’s FMP-related activities. His name was Robert Whitney, and as future music director of the Louisville Orchestra, he would soon become one of the country’s most persistent advocates for new music.

¹³ Nick Taylor, *American-Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work* (New York: Bantam Books, 2008): 286.

¹⁴ Kenneth J. Bindas, *All of this Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA’s Federal Music Project and American Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995): 65.

Robert Whitney and the Louisville Orchestra

Born in England but raised in America, Whitney honed his musical craft while a composition student of Leo Sowerby's at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. Before long, he found that his compositional achievements were quickly surpassed by his other musical efforts—working as a conductor and administrator, serving as a radio announcer, managing his own family trio with sisters Grace and Noreen, and conducting the Chicago Civic Orchestra under the guidance of Frederick Stock. While supervising the Chicago branch of the Federal Music Project (1935–7), Whitney still found the time to conduct local and regional ensembles, and it was in this capacity that he was brought to the attention of Dann Byck, then president of the Civic Arts Association, Louisville's flagship performing arts organization in the mid-1930s.¹⁵

In the summer of 1937, Byck reached out to Whitney to gauge his interest in helping to start a professional orchestra in Louisville, which had long struggled to maintain a culture of support for symphonic music.¹⁶ Whitney responded affirmatively, and invited representatives from the search committee to attend a concert featuring the Illinois Symphony Orchestra on 23 June 1937.¹⁷ He made such a favorable impression that after a short follow-up interview in Louisville, he was offered a \$2,500 annual salary

¹⁵ Carole C. Birkhead, "The History of the Orchestra in Louisville," M.A. Thesis, University of Louisville, 1977.

¹⁶ The earliest records of an orchestral ensemble in Louisville date back to 1822, when the St. Cecilia Society was founded. The first Louisville Philharmonic Society was started in 1866 as a collaborative ensemble and continued giving concerts until 1910, when the group disbanded. Between 1910 and 1937, there was no official orchestra representing the city of Louisville, and it was not until 1930 that a Civic Arts Association was founded to bolster the city's performing arts scene.

¹⁷ Though he was only one of six conductors to lead the orchestra that night, Whitney made an especially favorable impression on the selection committee by conducting his own symphony and meeting with some of the committee members after the concert. The next month, those in attendance recalled Whitney as "highly intelligent, humorous, and perceptive. In conversation he impressed more positively than he did on stage, though his conducting [was] definitely positive" (Board Minutes (1937), Louisville Orchestra Collection, University of Louisville Archives).

to conduct both the Civic Arts Orchestra and at the local university, where he would be invited to teach music theory and composition. Although the workload and accompanying wage represented a step down from his FMP position, Whitney had tired of purely administrative work, and was looking forward to working directly with musicians on a regular basis.¹⁸

With eight weeks to prepare for his first subscription concert, Whitney quickly realized that his orchestra was anything but professional. While members of the ensemble included some thirty university faculty, many were not trained as professional musicians, and the remainder consisted of students from the university and local public schools. Only some of the players were unionized, though this quickly changed so as to achieve equal pay throughout the ensemble—a base rate of \$7 per concert and \$3 per rehearsal. The artistic quality of the orchestra mirrored its lack of professional pedigree. In Whitney's own words,

There were no French horn players, there was only one oboe player, there were no bassoon players. Of the players there were, there were very few of them of a quality necessary for presenting symphonic music. I discovered that one reason for this was that we could not call upon all of those competent to play because there had been factional feuds going on in this community for generations and particularly in the years prior to my coming.¹⁹

In the face of these difficulties, Whitney pressed on and conducted the orchestra's first concert on 8 November 1937 to an audience of 600—the hall's capacity numbered 2,350.

¹⁸ Before he could accept the offer, however, Whitney was notified that the university had withdrawn its offer, citing an "insufficiently broad cultural background" and a lack of appropriate professional credentials. Without the matching funds provided by the university, it appeared as though the Civic Arts Association would not be able to secure the already meager salary necessary to attract Whitney to Louisville.¹⁸ But with less than one month before the season was to begin, a single patron—Barry Ringham—stepped forward to cover the balance of the conductor's salary, and on 1 September 1937, Whitney began his tenure as music director (As stated in a 21 July 1937 letter to Whitney written by Dann Byck (Louisville Orchestra Collection, University of Louisville Archives).

¹⁹ Interview by Charles P. Berry, 5 February 1970 (transcript located at the Oral History Center, University of Louisville).

Despite the dubious artistic merits of the performance and lackluster attendance, the performance was a step in the right direction and, for Whitney, an opportunity to build his mettle as a conductor.²⁰ More than thirty years later, he would look back on the performance with astonishment: “My experience as a conductor was most limited. The only thing I had going in my favor was that there was no orchestra either. So we could learn together, and this is what happened.... I’m awfully glad we don’t have a tape recording of that first performance.”²¹

By the end of Whitney’s first year, the orchestra seemed to be doing better than expected, accruing a deficit of \$660 on a budget of \$8,442—about half of what the board of directors had projected at the beginning of the year. Nevertheless, the first ten years of the Civic Arts Orchestra—later named the Louisville Philharmonic Society (1942) and then the Louisville Orchestra (1949)—were marked by continuous financial shortfalls. Such an endemic deficit was by no means out of the ordinary for other orchestras around the country, as the costs associated with producing live concerts quickly outpaced any gains in ticket revenue. Nevertheless, prominent community members began to take notice of the orchestra’s improvement, and the University of Louisville even decided to offer Whitney an adjunct teaching position. In a letter to the editor of the local newspaper dated 18 May 1938, orchestra supporter Mrs. James Ross Todd noted that

Other cities of the size of Louisville long ago realized that the furtherance of a fine orchestra is a vital civic enterprise, one to be sponsored and encouraged wholeheartedly. I have followed the growth of our orchestra under the able direction of Robert Whitney with keen satisfaction, glad at

²⁰ According to early records, nearly all of the principal wind players for the first concert were hired from the Cincinnati Symphony by personnel manager Joseph Hitz. These musicians performed without attending a single rehearsal, however, due to the orchestra’s budgetary restraints.

²¹ Robert Whitney interview with Charles Berry, 5 February 1970 (Oral History Center, University of Louisville).

last that we have an organization that can contribute importantly to the cultural life of Louisville.²²

Whitney concurrently instigated a series of young peoples' concerts for local students, taking time to give impromptu composition lessons and going so far as to invite the most promising students to submit their own compositions for performance with the orchestra. Led by J. Alexander Stewart, the orchestra's board of directors also worked to forge connections between ensemble and community. A volunteer Women's Association was formed in 1942, and by 1945 they were regularly inviting world-renowned soloists such as Isaac Stern and Benny Goodman to perform with the orchestra, offering reduced-price tickets to select companies for themed "Industrial Night" concerts, and producing a new series of pops concerts at Churchill Downs.²³

Despite these creative strategies, however, the Louisville Orchestra continued to grapple with the financial challenges embedded in live orchestral performance and outlined in this dissertation's introduction. Any artistic gains were severely constrained by the paltry salaries available to principal players in the ensemble. In 1947, the personnel expenses (as outlined by Whitney himself) included a base salary of \$50 per week (or \$1,150 per year, with a 23-week season; see Figure 3.1 for a handwritten matrix of musician salaries).²⁴ To attract and retain better musical talent, Dean Dwight Anderson of the University of Louisville's School of Music offered teaching positions to some of the orchestra's musicians in the fall of 1944. Two years later, Louisville hired its first

²² "Letter to the Editor," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 18 May 1938.

²³ Unfortunately, several of these initiatives—including the outdoor concerts held at Churchill Downs—resulted in financial losses for the orchestra (Box 54: Correspondence, 1943–46, Folder: Organization Plans (1943–45), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

²⁴ Box IX, Folder I, Robert Whitney Papers (University of Louisville Archives).

Figure 3.1 A matrix of musician salaries for the 1947-48 season, handwritten by Whitney (Box IX, Folder 1, Robert Whitney Papers, University of Louisville Archives).

3500	2500	3000	2000	1200	1000	1500
Idolar Hawa	Wick Whitney Kershner	Trumpet Newman	Bass Player Harp Gondroce MaDewall Towle	Towle Griffith Latalow Krats Towle Chalford Kirk Eckhart Towle (Sunder?) Bigman Madryjallas 2 Room player Lichtman Other	Smith Willmuth Maltosa Palmer Robinson Lous (?) Hunnings (?) Cobbart Hitz Hankins Sloan Kline Torode Markart Curng Harde Percussive	Torode Jackson Otton
	Part time players make \$350.00					
7000 1,500 3,000 10,000 18,000 17,000 62,500	7500 1,000 3,000 8,000 15,500 17,000 4,500 57,600	3000	8,000	17,200	7,000	4,500
		7,000.00 7,500.00 3,000.00 8,000.00 4,500.00 30,000.00 7,000.00 24,000.00 61,000.00 10,400.00 71,800.00 10,500.00 81,800.00				
	extra 8 concerts			+ 27 @ 50 = 1,350 per month 8 19,800		

full-time manager to help manage the orchestra's season and reign in its finances, which continued to be marked by growing deficits (\$31,000 by 1946, and \$74,500 by 1948).²⁵

In an attempt to balance the budget and raise local awareness of the orchestra's activities, manager John G. Snowden organized a three-day Jubilee in late April of 1947 to mark the group's ten-year anniversary. The Jubilee registered as one of the largest musical events in Louisville's history, and the program included Verdi's Requiem along with a special performance by the New York Philharmonic under George Szell.²⁶ Despite the goodwill created by the program, however, the orchestra had a difficult time fundraising for the event, ultimately losing money on what was supposed to be a profitable venture.²⁷ Later that year, the board of directors moved to form a Progress Fund aimed at erasing the orchestra's debt and building a permanent endowment. Figure 3.2 reproduces an internal letter to Fund committee members that provides fascinating details concerning the nascent fundraising process used by mid-century American orchestras. Thanks in large part to the work of Dann Byck, the Fund succeeded in reaching its goal, securing a future—albeit tenuous—for the Louisville Orchestra.

Charles Farnsley and the New Music Project

By 1948, with a newly funded endowment in place, the Louisville Orchestra seemed to have hit its stride. To keep pace with the orchestra's expanding operations,

²⁵ Financial Statements, 1946–48, Louisville Orchestra Collection (University of Louisville Archives).

²⁶ The full schedule of the Jubilee was as follows: Day 1—Verdi's Requiem, performed with a children's chorus of 1500 and soloists Rose Bampton, Herta Glaz, Frederick Jagel, and Mack Harrell; Day 2—Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, Grieg's Piano Concerto (feat. Alec Templeton); Day 3—George Szell and the New York Philharmonic (Box 54: Correspondence, 1943–46, Folder: Organization Plans (1943–45), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

²⁷ Archival documents provide an interesting look into the orchestra's fundraising difficulties, as letters from manager John G. Snowden to a handful of other orchestra managers their advice suggest. These include letters to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Oklahoma Symphony Orchestra, and the St. Louis Symphony (Box 63: Correspondence, 1947–48, Folder: Spring Festival, April 28, 29, 30, 1947, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

Figure 3.2 Progress Fund Letter, 7 May 1947 (Box 62, Folder: Progress Fund, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017))

Chairman
 DANN C. BYCK

Vice-Chairman
 DAVID F. COCKS
 JOSEPH A. ENGLEHARD

Treasurer
 EARL R. MUIR

Women's Division
 MRS. A. J. PHARR

General Solicitations
 NEIL DALTON

Special Gifts
 CHARLES G. TACHAU

 *
Organizations
Director
 PAUL WHITMAN

 *
COMMITTEE
 LILE BAKER, JR.
 MRS. MORRIS BELKNAP
 LEWIS COLE
 G. W. COOK
 C. J. DEUTSCH
 J. J. EGAN
 WM. G. FREDERICK
 T. V. HARTNETT
 LOUIS J. HERRMANN
 GUSTAV A. HEUSER
 FERRE KREMER
 MRS. DENNIS LONG
 EDWARD J. MILLER, JR.
 MRS. GEO. W. NORTON, JR.
 WILLIAM G. RYNGOLDS
 MELLE ROBERTSON
 MARTIN L. SCHMIDT
 CURTIS SCOTT
 J. ALEXANDER STEWART
 JAMES C. THONE
 MILTON S. TROST
 R. G. TWAY
 ALVIN A. YOIT
 MAJOR A. M. WATSON
 F. ERWIN WERNHE
 H. FREDERICK W. LAKE

1947 PROGRESS FUND
of the
LOUISVILLE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

228 Guthrie Street • Jackson 5260 • Louisville 7, Kentucky
 May 7, 1947

To Committee Members:

Enclosed are the prospect cards assigned to you. The Campaign Committee has compiled a comprehensive prospect list of all individuals and firms which should be regarded as potential donors.

In some cases, you will find an indication of the amount which the Committee believes is within the reasonable ability of the prospect to contribute. This suggested rating will be found on the 3x5 colored card attached to the subscription card and is intended only for your guidance. In other cases, however, the Committee did not feel justified in indicating a rating. Here you are asked to exercise your own judgment as to the amount to be sought, bearing in mind that the individuals and firms represented on these cards have generous giving records to many worth while community undertakings, ranging in amounts from a minimum of \$25 to a maximum of several hundred dollars.

Quotas have been set-up as follows:

Special Gifts	\$75,000
Men's Division	40,000
Women's Division	35,000

The quota for your team is \$_____ and the success of the campaign is, of course, dependent upon the fulfillment of each quota.

If you desire additional prospect cards after these assignments are completed, Headquarters at 228 Guthrie is prepared to furnish them.

APOLOGIA: So far as headquarters is able to determine there is no duplication of prospects in your kits with the possible exception that a few committee member's cards may be duplicated, because they were omitted only a few days ago. Your own card is in your Supply Envelope and you are requested to disregard a possible solicitation from any other source. You are also urged, before asking others to give, to first contribute as generously as you can.

"To Make a Good Town Better"

John Woolford was hired to be the ensemble's new business manager. Woolford, a product of Arthur Judson's staff at the New York Philharmonic, appealed to Whitney and the board because he was "a man with wide business experience and many ideas that would be helpful in putting the organization on a more sound business basis ... [a] man who could sell the business and industrial men of this town on our project."²⁸ Indeed, one of Woolford's first tasks would be to build a renewable audience for orchestral music in Louisville, something that had as yet eluded Whitney and his orchestra. Some of the group's local supporters recognized this, including A.W. Adams, a Sales Promotion Manager at Sears, Roebuck and Co. who lamented the following in a 31 December 1947 letter:

I'm talking in terms of "masses"—people—and people are customers—and customers ring the cash registers—and money pays for the orchestra! It takes big money to support a symphony. Especially to half-filled houses. It's noticeable, too, on the orchestra personnel. We all play better to big audiences regardless of our business.²⁹

This admonition was echoed in the local press, which chalked up meager concert attendance with a desire for more popular programming—a condition that the orchestra would continue to struggle with for the foreseeable future.³⁰

²⁸ According to a letter from Whitney to friend Hans Rosenwald written on 9 June 1948, Woolford was hired over musicologist Richard Kirchhoff due to his previous experience in marketing and managing an orchestra. Another unsuccessful candidate for the position, George Weigl, expressed the following advice upon learning that a "Judson man" had been hired: "Be stern and run the artistic side of your orchestra yourself. That is your duty to yourself and your friends, the committee, or the executive board. If you don't, in a very short time your orchestra will lose its identity. Let your business manager take care of its business and that only" (Letter dated 24 June 1948, reproduced in Box 65: Correspondence, 1948, Folder: Applications (Manager), 1948, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives).

²⁹ Box 62: Correspondence, 1947, Folder: Miscellaneous, 1947, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives.

³⁰ See Paul Hughes, "Inflation and Public Criticism Play 'Moaning Low' for L.P.O.," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 18 January 1948.

One member of the board—Charles Farnsley—knew all too well that, if the orchestra wished to attain a privileged position within the community, it would have to simultaneously reshape its artistic identity and revenue structure. Although Farnsley was relatively new to the orchestra, having joined its board in December 1947, he was a familiar face within the Louisville community. Born in 1907 to a powerful Kentucky family, Farnsley obtained a law degree from the University of Louisville (1930) and constructed an impressive political career. He served in the 38th district of the Kentucky House of Representatives between 1938 and 1940, later going on to serve as mayor of Louisville (1948–53) and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives (1965–67), where he helped to found the National Endowment for the Arts and continued to generate funding for performing arts organizations throughout the city of Louisville.

In early 1948, shortly before succeeding the recently deceased Leland Taylor as mayor, Farnsley was elected president of the orchestra's board of directors. Although history has celebrated Farnsley's visionary leadership of the orchestra, he never actually served in the capacity of president due to his unexpected ascension to the position of mayor that spring. Despite any inaccuracies attached to Farnsley's formal relationship with the orchestra, however, one cannot contest the significance of his impact. Upon joining the board, Farnsley called Robert Whitney into his law offices for a private conference. Several decades later, Whitney recalled the contents of this meeting:

Farnsley began by saying: "Look, you're broke, you'll always be broke the way you're going, and I have an idea that I think could change all this." He said, "Number one: you had Helen Traubel as a soloist here last month. What did you pay her?" And I think as I recall that we paid her the rather extravagant sum of three thousand dollars. And he said, "Well that's fine and she's a fine singer, but what have you got now?" ... "Suppose you had taken the money that you spend for your guest artists this year and you had engaged the very best composers in the world that

you could find to write music for you and played this music for the first time anywhere, then you would be making a concrete contribution to the music. And furthermore if we were lucky and happened to hit a masterpiece, you would be in the history books.” And I said, “Well Charlie, that’s fine, but how about the audience?” “Oh,” he said, “don’t worry about the audience. They want what’s good.”³¹

To be sure, Farnsley’s proposition seemed far-fetched: replace famous guest artists with little-known composers who would write music for an orchestra that catered to a relatively conservative listening public. Yet his plan resonated with Whitney, who had experienced the commissioning process firsthand while running the Chicago Federal Music Project.

The conductor did not take long to think about the potential outcomes of such an unorthodox endeavor. Despite his concerns regarding the public reception of new music, Whitney was convinced that initiating such a project would help the orchestra financially by replacing excessive guest artist costs with one-time commissioning fees. Farnsley’s letters to Whitney and others suggest that he considered the project both a form of advocacy on behalf of the modern composer and a means to distinguish Louisville from other orchestras around the country that were more talented, had access to more resources, and were linked to more prestigious historical roots.³² By thinking outside of the realm of perceived possibility, Farnsley and Whitney concocted a scheme that would attract a national audience while providing financial and artistic sustenance to the orchestra, or so they believed.

Although Farnsley is often credited with the genesis of the NMP, extant records suggest that the board had already discussed at least some aspects of the project,

³¹ Robert S. Whitney, Transcript of Tapes 29–32, pp.76-83, Series 1 (1970), Record Group 60, Oral History Collection, University of Louisville Archives.

³² See, for example, Robert Whitney Papers (1947), University of Louisville Archives.

including a move from their current concert hall, Memorial Auditorium, to the smaller Columbia Auditorium. The first formal articulation of the NMP likely occurred at a board meeting held on 20 February 1948. According to the secretary's minutes,

Mr. Farnsley felt that we should have composers instead of soloists—'it cost no more to get top composers than guest artists—our press would be good on it and I have a definite feeling that soloists are making good money but creators are not.' He said considerable money could be made from radio sponsors. He questioned whether or not our concerts be held in Memorial Auditorium and suggested we move to Columbia or some other smaller hall.³³

By the beginning of April, the "Farnsley Plan" had gained considerable momentum within the organization. Renovations to Columbia Auditorium were being discussed, as was the possibility of commissioning and recording new works from Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, and William Walton.³⁴ Moreover, the plan included a provision that would see the orchestra shrink from seventy to fifty paid members, invoking Farnsley's Jeffersonian ideals and reviving an eighteenth-century model of musical performance and patronage.³⁵

Before delving into the early years of the New Music Project, it is worth noting the surprising shortage of references pertaining to the NMP in any of the orchestra's records prior to the fall of 1948. Upon closer reading, this suggests both that the

³³ Box 65: Correspondence, 1948, Folder: Board Meeting Minutes, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives.

³⁴ Stated in a letter from James Bagby to Farnsley on 31 March 1948, Box 67: Correspondence, 1948-49, Folder: Plans for 1948-49 season, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives.

³⁵ Although much has been made about the orchestra's apparent contraction, Whitney saw it as an expansion of the group's permanent membership. In a letter to artist manager Paul Stoes dated 22 June 1948, he confessed that the orchestra was "taking some very drastic departures in procedure here. We are increasing our professional group of 43 players to 50 and dropping the additional part time members.... [and] realizing the futility of trying to compete with the caliber of "box office" Mr. Thurman and Mr. Meyer are bringing to Louisville next season we are commissioning six eminent composers to write short works for us" (Box 68: Correspondence, 1948-50, Folder: Plans for 1948-49 season, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives).

commissioning project was seen as just one of the orchestra's many initiatives, and that its initial planning phases were undertaken in private by Whitney (conductor), Woolford (manager), and Farnsley (patron). While we must infer many of the details leading up to the NMP's launch in 1948, its subsequent success almost immediately transformed the orchestra into an internationally recognized ensemble. On 29 August of that year, the orchestra publicly announced its plan to "blaze a new trail" by concentrating on the presentation of newly-composed works by local and world-class composers, directing the Louisville music community down a path that few, if any, would have predicted.³⁶

The NMP's Early Years, 1948–50

The 1948–49 season included six pairs of subscription concerts, all of which featured works commissioned by Whitney and the orchestra.³⁷ The composers commissioned included Darius Milhaud, Virgil Thomson, Roy Harris, Joaquin Rodrigo, Gian-Francesco Malipiero, and Louisville's own Claude Almand. The latter had in fact been a board member with the orchestra but chose to resign before accepting a commission from Whitney, so as to deter any anxiety over preferential treatment.³⁸ Extant archival documentation also suggests that the orchestra's existing structure and its limitations played a substantive role in shaping the new musical works created. For example, in a letter to Roy Harris, John Woolford vents his frustration regarding the composer's preferred orchestration:

I am upset to learn from the scoring of *Kentucky Spring* that there are several extra parts which we do not have. If you will review our

³⁶ The commissioning project was first reported by Edward F. Devol, Jr., "Louisville's Philharmonic Prepares to Blaze a New Trail," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 29 August 1948.

³⁷ Birkhead incorrectly labels the first season of the commissioning project as 1947–48.

³⁸ Discussed at a 6 August 1948 board meeting and reproduced in Box 65: Correspondence, 1948, Folder: Board Meeting Minutes, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

correspondence ... you will see we have no bass clarinet, no 3rd trumpet, bassoon, oboe, extra flute, nor harp.... I would point out that the extra players involved are not merely a question of additional costs but also the unavailability of the players themselves. The best instrumentalists in the vicinity of Louisville are already in the Orchestra, and other qualified musicians simply do not exist.³⁹

The geographic identity of the orchestra also influenced several of the newly commissioned works. Both Harris and Milhaud drew on the orchestra's home state for inspiration, titling their compositions *Kentucky Spring* and *Kentuckiana*, respectively. Milhaud's work, which borrows material from no fewer than twenty Kentucky folk tunes,⁴⁰ was especially well received, moving dean of the local conservatory and part-time music critic Dwight Anderson to describe the work an "authentic rendering of the American south."⁴¹

The logistics initially associated with the New Music Project were relatively straightforward, although records suggest that Woolford and Whitney were forced to learn how to court in-demand composers, design commissioning agreements, negotiate terms, and effectively delegate responsibility.⁴² Each composer was paid a commissioning fee of \$1000 inclusive of all copying costs, which might explain the

³⁹ Box 143: Commissioning Project, Folder: Artists (1948–49 season): Roy Harris, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives. Another example of orchestra personnel effecting the compositional process occurred over the summer of 1950, when Vincent Persichetti was commissioned to write a work for the fledgling NMP. In an extended correspondence with Whitney, Persichetti asks if the orchestra's various wind players are able to double on other instruments. In a response dated 9 June 1950, Whitney confesses that the second oboe player "is by no means a fine artist.... If you write in the [English] horn, do not give it undue prominence" (Ibid., Folder: Vincent Persichetti, composer, 1950–51 season).

⁴⁰ This figure is quoted in the composer's program note, which is reproduced in Box 197: Programs, 1937–75, Folder: 1948/49 Season, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

⁴¹ Dwight Anderson, "New Milhaud Work Grasps Kentucky Spirit." *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 5, 1949.

⁴² Prior to the 1948–49 season, John Woolford wrote to Louise Fry of the New York Philharmonic, asking for advice about how to go about structuring a commissioning contract. One technicality that initially eluded both Woolford and Whitney was the extraction of parts, which could be both time consuming and costly. Between 1948 and 1950, several composers and publishers—including Virgil Thomson and Ralph Hawkes—make it clear in no uncertain terms that the orchestra should either take care of part extraction or provide extra funds for the composer to do so (Box 143: Commissioning Project, Folder: Artists (1948–49 season): Virgil Thomson, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

relative brevity (five to eight minutes) of works composed for the Louisville Orchestra that year. Four of the six composers received an additional \$500 to conduct the orchestra in concert. In stark contrast to past seasons, only three soloists were hired to perform with the orchestra, confirming the orchestra's unique commitment to the composer and his or her music. Nevertheless, the power wielded by certain guest artists—including soprano Kathleen Ferrier, violinist Isaac Stern, and, as we will see, dancer Martha Graham—continued to shape how the orchestra conducted the commissioning process.⁴³ For instance, in 1951, Stern was asked to choose a composer who would write a new violin work that he in turn would perform with the orchestra. Stern's response is worth quoting at length:

I would like to have been able to recommend for your consideration and agreement an American composer in whom we might have confidence. Yet this has proved very difficult.... [Among] American composers I find that they all have great facility and interest, yet there is something lacking,

⁴³ On 29 October 1948, Andre Mertens of Mertens, Parmelee & Brown (a subsidiary of CAMI) contacted Woolford about the possibility of engaging the up-and-coming soprano Kathleen Ferrier. Woolford expressed interest, suggesting that she might sing a few newly commissioned songs by Benjamin Britten. A fee of \$1000 for two concerts was agreed upon, along with a tentative date toward the end of the 1948–49 season. Woolford was subsequently unable to obtain a positive response from Britten, prompting Mertens to write that “Evidently the entire Ferrier matter is getting mixed-up. I am sorry, but since you have not been able to give me a definite decision I have had to accept other engagements. The only date I can give you is January 6, 1950.... If January 6 is not agreeable, I will try to move [Ferrier's Nashville concert] to January 6th and arrange January 3 and 4 which would make it possible for you to have the pair.” Unforeseen conflicts would later force the concerts to the fall of 1950, at which point Woolford wrote Ralph Hawkes, Britten's publisher, to extend a second commission offer. On 28 November 1949, Hawkes replied and noted that, while Britten would certainly be interested in writing a pair of songs for Ferrier, he was previously committed to work on *Billy Bud*.

At this point—almost two years since the beginning of the commissioning process—the board apparently discussed whether or not it would be worthwhile to simply present Ferrier unattached. According to minutes from a 7 October 1949 meeting, “Mr. Whitney expressed the opinion that we should go on with the composer policy and he thinks we should not retreat from the policy now ... [and] we should not put her before the policy of the Society even though she is a brilliant artist.” This lengthy back-and-forth speaks to the increasing complexity of the commissioning process, something all the more extraordinary considering Britten never wrote a new work for the orchestra. Similar correspondences exist with other composers, including Poulenc and Copland, who was not able to accept the invitation until 1954, five years after he was first approached by Whitney (Box 68: Correspondence, 1948–50, Folder: Artists, 1949–50 Season, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

a strength, a clearly defined direction and individuality that would prevent their works standing above the level of those already produced.⁴⁴

Stern eventually nominated Paul Hindemith to write a violin concerto, only later to suggest Leonard Bernstein for the job. In the end, neither wrote a work for Stern, although Hindemith did write several other works for the orchestra over the lifespan of the NMP. Despite the complexity of the commissioning process, however, the resulting performances quickly received national attention, thanks in part to Virgil Thomson's position as an eminent critic and the relative lack of precedent among American orchestras.⁴⁵ Press coverage in the *Louisville Times and Courier-Journal*—an early financial supporter of the orchestra—was augmented by reports in the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Hartford Times*, *Rochester (NY) Democrat*, *Anderson (IN) Herald*, *Oklahoma City Oklahoman*, *Portland (Maine) Telegram*, and *Christian Science Monitor*.⁴⁶

By the end of the season, however, it became clear that commissioning new works was not saving the orchestra money. Instead it was costing them more, aggravating the group's already fragile financial position and counteracting any artistic progress. Between 1943 and 1949 the orchestra's expenses increased nearly twenty-fold, due mostly to increases in musicians' salaries (from \$4,000 to \$78,000) and the expansion of the concert season.⁴⁷ According to at least one board member, however, the orchestra was

⁴⁴ From a letter dated 16 February 1952, reproduced in Box 83: Correspondence, 1954–55, Folder: 1954–55 Season plans, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

⁴⁵ According to Sandra Fralin's study of the New Music Project, during the 1947–48 season, only sixty-two orchestral works were commissioned and premiered nationwide (Fralin, "The Role of the Louisville Orchestra in the Fostering of New Music," Appendix).

⁴⁶ All of these papers covered the opening concert, though none, as far as I can tell, sent critics to Louisville to report on the concert itself. Instead, most of the press simply outlined the project and its goals.

⁴⁷ Louisville Orchestra Audits, 1943–49, Louisville Orchestra Collection, University of Louisville Archives.

still being run “on a hit-or-miss method.”⁴⁸ In a letter to his former boss at the New York Philharmonic, Woolford confided to Bruno Zirato that

The situation with the Orchestra is good all except the fact that we need dough in the worst way. The Orchestra had jogged along for 11 seasons making steady but very slow progress. It is not for me to brag that this year a tremendous amount of interest has been aroused, but the fact remains that it has. The new auditorium into which we moved this season is a gem accoustically [sic].... The Orchestra technically began this season to show the results of 12 years of slow, plodding, heartbreaking work and training, and sounds very creditably.... It has been a terrific shot in the arm for the people here to see their Orchestra mentioned in *Time*, the *NY Times* and *Tribune*, and various other newspapers.... In any case the building of a season around the composer has proved intriguing enough both here and outside of Louisville that there is every intention of continuing it next season.⁴⁹

Financial records for the years surrounding the project’s realization show a shrinking deficit, and a surplus by 1950, but this is due not to the NMP but rather the significant monies provided by the Louisville Fund, a local “treasure chest for the arts” set up in 1923 and still active today. Figure 3.3 provides a breakdown of these figures, showing how contributions from the Louisville Fund helped to hide significant losses in ticket revenue.

Although no longer a regular presence at board meetings, Charles Farnsley remained a driving force behind the NMP, and thus it was he who brokered an eleventh-hour deal between the Fund and the orchestra. Under the terms of the agreement, the

⁴⁸ Quoting a Mr. Willis from the minutes of a 11 March 1949 board meeting. Willis and two other board members (Stone and DuRand) go on to report the organizational history of the orchestra and some possible strategies to cover the increasing costs associated with the commissioning project, including greater government support and a reduced concert season (Box 68: Correspondence, 1948–50, Folder: Board Meeting Minutes (Jan. through June, 1949), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁴⁹ Excerpted from a letter dated 3 February 1949, reproduced in Box 71: Correspondence, 1949–51, Folder: Plans for 1949–50 season, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

Figure 3.3 Financial Data, 1948–51

	1948–49	1949–50	1950–51
Earned Income (ticket sales)	\$49,741.93	\$42,923.88	\$34,490.05
Contributed Income	\$97,342.70	\$70,649.30	\$68,588.14
(Louisville Fund)	~\$40,000	\$49,430.60	\$47,228.90
Total Income	\$147,084.63	\$113,573.18	\$103,078.19
Expenses	\$124,426.69	\$111,175.34	\$101,450.20
Annual surplus/deficit	\$22,657.94	\$2,397.84	\$1,881.99
Surplus/deficit at beginning of year	-\$24,418.31	-\$1,760.37	\$637.47
Total surplus/deficit	-\$1,760.37	\$637.47	\$2,519.46

orchestra was to receive \$40,000 contingent on the following conditions: strengthen its Board of Directors, plan and implement a professional fundraising drive, and secure greater public support.⁵⁰ These tenets were outlined in a public letter that was published in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* on 4 February 1949, providing unique insight into the tension between the commissioning project and the diverging interests of the general public—a tension that the Louisville Fund tried to resolve. With renewed support from the city’s primary cultural foundation, the orchestra’s board agreed to continue the commissioning project on an ad-hoc basis; in no way was it guaranteed that the initiative would continue beyond 1950.

The second season of the project featured commissioned works by Paul Hindemith, William Schuman, David Diamond, Robert Russell Bennett, and, once again, Claude Almand. The opening concert was nearly sold- out, and was attended by the

⁵⁰ Records in the University of Louisville archives show that the Louisville Fund, which continues to support the local arts scene today, provided significant support to not only the orchestra but also Louisville Arts Center, Children’s Theatre, the Dance Council, the Institute of Architectural Design, Little Theatre, Junior Art Gallery, the Philharmonic Chorus, and the Committee for the Preservation of Historic building. In this particular instance, however, the Fund was only able to come up with \$21,000 of the promised \$40,00 grant, forcing the orchestra to hire a publicity firm to help raise additional funds and secure a broadcasting deal (Box 68: Correspondence, 1948–50, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

country's leading orchestra manager, Arthur Judson.⁵¹ But Louisville audiences were yet to be convinced of the project's artistic merits. In a 1949 *Times* editorial, Dwight Anderson lamented that "the [commissioning] venture was a blast in the face of provincial tradition which, at least in this community, declines to be impressed by new music until it has enjoyed a period of acceptance elsewhere."⁵² A year earlier, William Mootz noticed the same phenomenon, remarking in print that "the impression made on Louisville concert-goers [by the new music] was negligible."⁵³ Even the orchestra's own board of directors remained split regarding the artistic and organizational value of the commissioning project, with some members voicing concern that "six [new] works is too much for one season."⁵⁴

These observations ran counter to the perceptions held by national commentators, one of whom ventured to guess that the commissioned works would attract as much or more attention than the Kentucky Derby.⁵⁵ For those outside the community, "the wide civic participation developed in Louisville derives, one must believe, from a policy that seems to be purely local."⁵⁶ At an April 1949 conference for the Association of Women's Committees for Symphony Orchestras, board member Louise Kain confirmed this opinion, insisting that while

It [was] true that many of our subscribers shied at the announcement of our contemporary composer policy.... Most of them ... have come to find that not only was there little or no basis to their fear of modern music, but that they actually enjoyed the new works. The few remaining

⁵¹ Birkhead, *The History of the Orchestra in Louisville*, 1977.

⁵² Dwight Anderson, Editorial in *The New York Times*, 20 October 1949.

⁵³ William Mootz, "Louisville Orchestra, Opening 13th Season Wednesday, Acclaimed for Commissioning Works," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 30 October 1949.

⁵⁴ Quoting a Mrs. Belknap from the minutes of a 11 March 1949 board meeting (Box 68: Correspondence, 1948–50, Folder: Board Meeting Minutes (Jan. through June, 1949), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁵⁵ Glenn Dillard Funn, "Music: Symphony to Score," *Washington Times-Herald*, 28 August 1949.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

irreconcilables have come to take the resigned attitude that they can stand anything for ten minutes, particularly since the rest of the programs were chosen from classical repertoire.⁵⁷

This account conflicts with much of the public and private commentary cited above.

Indeed, Whitney resented the martyrdom of Louisville's audiences, proclaiming passionately at a board meeting the true value of the commissioning project, for both the orchestra and the city.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, then-president of the board Lisle Baker, together with Louisville Fund president Alexander Booth, approached Whitney in late December and told him that the next concert would be the last of the NMP.

William Schuman's *Judith* (1950)

Unbeknownst to Whitney and the board, the unprecedented success of that last 1949 commission—William Schuman's *Judith: A Choreographic Poem*—would shock Louisville audience into at least temporary acceptance and cement the New Music Project's existence for another eight years. Originally conceived for dancer Martha Graham, *Judith* was first proposed by Kain, who believed commissioning a “dance concerto” would appeal to both audiences and critics.⁵⁹ Graham chose Schuman to compose the music for her choreography, with each getting equal billing and Graham receiving \$1000 to Schuman's \$500. Although Graham was hesitant at first to comply

⁵⁷ Box 67: Correspondence, 1948–49, Folder: Miscellaneous, 1948–49, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁵⁸ At a 11 March 1949 board meeting, Whitney is quoted as follows: “Much as we wish to sell more tickets to our subscription concerts, we must not judge our value to the community by that criterion alone. Our true purpose is to nurture fine music in this community and build soundly for the future so that our children and children's children will inherit a fine music tradition.” He goes on, insisting that “We will never be able to reach the public en masse. It has been tried in every way but it cannot be done and [reaching] 1 in 100 is very good. [I] have talked to conductors of other orchestras and they agree. Pops concerts are not the answer.... Every year the number of listeners will increase but it will be gradual” (Box 68: Correspondence, 1948–50, Folder: Board Meeting Minutes (Jan. through June, 1949), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁵⁹ Birkhead, *The History of the Orchestra in Louisville*, 1977.

with Whitney's request for a solo dance work that could be performed onstage alongside the orchestra, she eventually acquiesced, drafting a "graph of the emotional line which she felt the dance should take" and sending it to Schuman, who composed the music before ever seeing extended components of the dance itself.⁶⁰

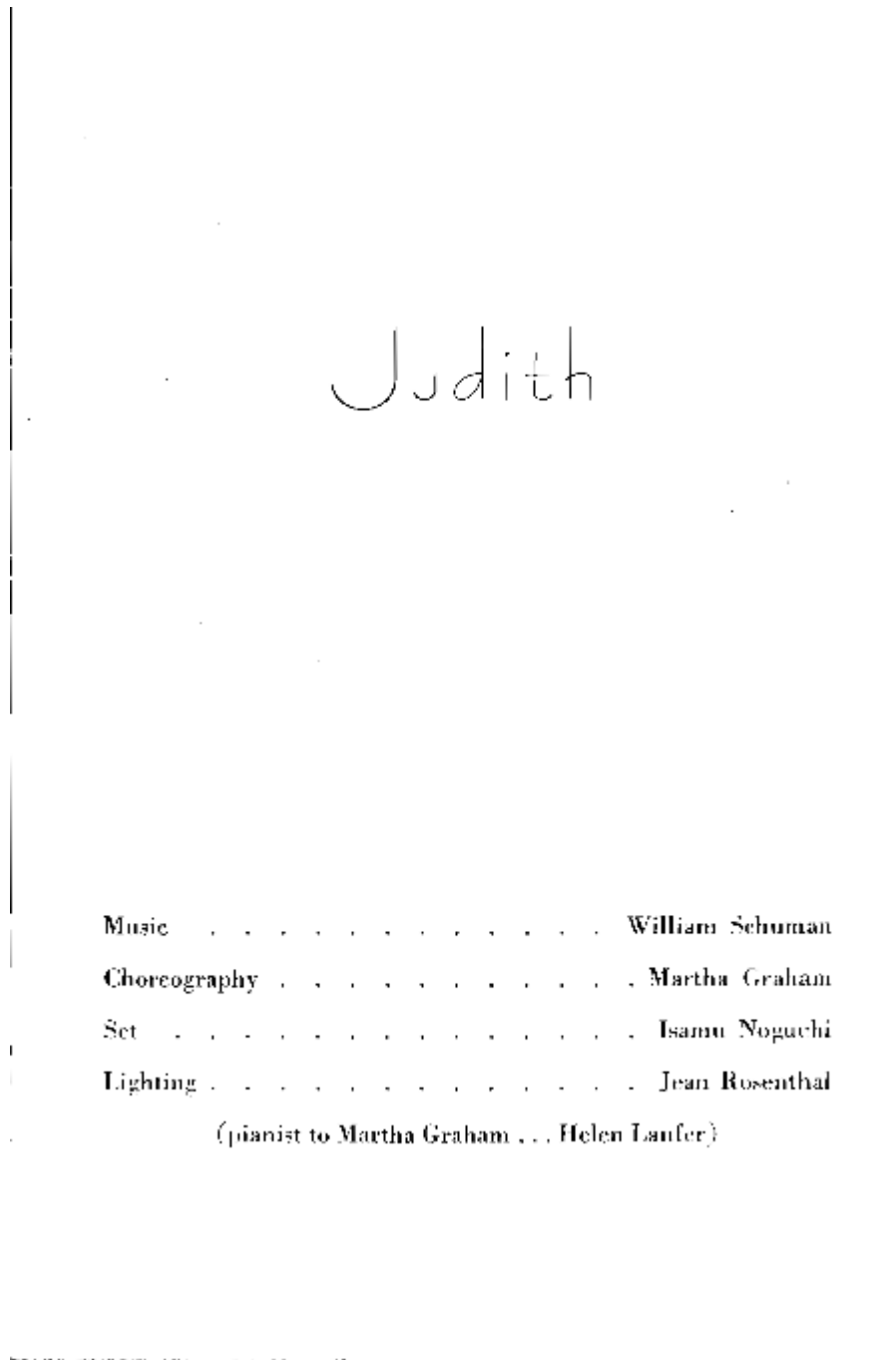
Graham chose to loosely base her choreography on the ancient tale of Judith, with its vivid imagery of a Jewish widow who beheads a tyrannical general, although evidence from Schuman's autograph manuscript suggests that the plot choice came after the music had been composed.⁶¹ Neither the music nor the dance adheres strictly to the plot's structure. Instead, *Judith* abstractly conveys the anxiety and turmoil experienced by the story's protagonist. As one might expect, the music is evocative and disjunct, opening with pulsating strings that are repeatedly interrupted by the brass and percussion. The brooding introduction is followed by a scherzo-like middle section, which moves between sections of the orchestra in concerto-like fashion. Along with Schuman's own stylistic traits, one can hear the influence of Graham, whose modernist bent is more evident in this work than, say, Copland's *Ballet for Martha* (1943). The autograph score also contains several notes concerning orchestration that once again suggest a substantive interaction between composer and orchestra (as well as choreographer and set, costume, and lighting designers) that shaped the final artistic product.⁶² Figure 3.4 reproduces the title page of the work, which is at once modest and austere.

⁶⁰ For the full program note, see Box 197: Programs, 1937–75, Folder: 1949/50, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

⁶¹ The title page of the holograph score for *Judith*, finished on 28 August 1949 and housed in the Library of Congress, bears only the title "Choreographic Poem for Orchestra" (ML96.S414 Case, William Schuman Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress).

⁶² For the premiere performance of *Judith*, Graham collaborated with Isamu Noguchi (set design), Alexander Calder (costumes), and Jean Rosenthal (lighting). On the bottom of the manuscript's title page, Schuman includes a note that "Bass Cl. And C.Bsn. may be considered optional instruments. If necessary

Figure 3.4 Title Page of Schuman and Graham's *Judith* (Library of Congress)



two rather than three players may be used for Picc, Fl & II and similarly for Ob. I & II and E.H.” In an appended document dated 12 January 1950, only a week after *Judith*’s premiere, Schuman chose to cut a 12-bar passage in the winds (originally mm. 144–156), perhaps due to that section’s difficulty and the limited ability of the orchestra’s personnel (Ibid.).

Due to the untenable financial state of the orchestra prior to *Judith*'s premiere, Whitney addressed the players and asked that they play on despite the very real possibility that they would not be paid for their services. Although evidence suggests that the import given to *Judith* for resurrecting the orchestra has been exaggerated, its success—and the continued support of both Graham and Schuman—surely helped the NMP's cause.⁶³ Premiered on 4 January 1950 to a sold-out audience, *Judith* transformed “a symphony orchestra program into a contemporary theater dance production” and secured the orchestra's first invitation to Carnegie Hall.⁶⁴ Three weeks later, *Judith* was broadcast around the country on NBC's “Pioneers of Music” series, and by March Schuman had arranged to have the work commercially recorded and performed in New York.

As president of the Juilliard School, the composer had connected Woolford and Whitney to David Hall, friend and Music Director at Mercury Records, with the hope that the orchestra might record *Judith* alongside another one of his works.⁶⁵ Up until this point, Whitney had “warded off the Board's plea for recording because, even if one of the big record companies could be interested in [them], he wasn't satisfied with the technical

⁶³ Jeanne Belfy contends that *Judith* did not save the NMP, but instead was premiered during a time of relative stability, with the low point referenced in Birkhead coming at the end of 1948, not 1949. The myth marking *Judith* as a turning point for the orchestra allegedly stems from a 1967 program note written by Whitney, and later propagated by manager Jack Firestone in an op-ed piece written for a Contemporary Music Conference in 1981. Belfy argues that, in fact, *Judith* was commissioned as a response to the financial crisis of 1947–48, and thus should not be afforded such heightened status. It seems clear that, in either case, the orchestra continued to be in a nearly continuously precarious position financially. For more on this issue, see Jeanne Marie Belfy, “Judith and the Louisville Orchestra: The Rest of the Story,” *College Music Symposium* 31 (1991): 36–48.

⁶⁴ As stated in an article from the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 4 January 1950.

⁶⁵ Woolford had originally planned to approach Columbia to do the recording, but Schuman thought “it was unrealistic . . . to approach Goddard Lieberston at Columbia Records for the very simple reason that they are recording my Third symphony next year with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra” (from a letter dated 15 February 1950, reproduced in Box 168: Recording Project Correspondence, Folder: Recording by Mercury Records, 1950, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

proficiency of the Orchestra. This season, however, ... he feels we might really have something to offer the record buying public.”⁶⁶ Schuman agreed, but the orchestra soon realized that the costs associated with producing a professional recording were prohibitive. In another letter to Schuman, Woolford expressed his concerns:

I have gone into the costs of a recording session quite exhaustively and find that the expenses involved ... would be between \$3,000 and \$4,000. To be very frank we are operating on a prayer these days.... We have talked with a number of our main fundraisers and they have all agreed that the recording would be a wonderful thing. However they are fearful that if we go to a number of our big backers now for recording funds, it would jeopardize our appeal for the funds we have to secure in order to have an orchestra next season. I will tell you confidentially that we have had to cut our budget for next season by some \$40,000.... For once we are going to try to operate on the funds we actually have and not on those we hope to get.... In short, an expenditure of \$3,000 or \$4,000 is out of the question in our present plight.⁶⁷

Recognizing a tremendous opportunity and refusing to let it slip away, Schuman suggested arranging the recording session around a special concert at Carnegie Hall.⁶⁸

Indeed, Schuman saw the recording as “the most important opportunity for the future of [the] orchestra,” and one that should not be ignored.⁶⁹

Despite no clear source of funding for either project, planning for both the Carnegie Hall concert and the commercial recording commenced immediately. A team of recording engineers traveled to Louisville on 19 and 20 November 1950 to capture performances of *Judith* (conducted by Whitney) and *Undertow* (conducted by Schuman),

⁶⁶ Quoted from a letter written by Woolford to Schuman, dated 11 February 1950 (Ibid.).

⁶⁷ Letter dated 14 March 1950, Ibid.

⁶⁸ Schuman was certainly wary that such a large undertaking could also sink the orchestra, noting to Woolford that while the concert “might help your budget problem ... it might make it worse. That is the fun of trying to combine music and business” (letter dated 27 February 1950, Ibid.).

⁶⁹ Schuman’s full telegram to Woolford displays an almost-fatherly concern for the orchestra: “My opinion recording most important opportunity for future of orchestra ... Gave permission for you to record my works after serious consideration ... Very disturbed by what seems to me capricious indecision ... Have worked hard and spent time for your organization and will continue to do so but in all candor my say vacillation on recording difficult to accept” (Ibid.).

but the orchestra was only able to afford eighty minutes of recording time for over fifty minutes of music. Although the recording of *Undertow* proved adequate, Schuman and Hall found the orchestra's rendition of *Judith* to be unacceptable for wide release.⁷⁰ Mercury offered to record a patch session free of charge during the orchestra's scheduled trip to New York, but the administration would need to find more than \$2000 in an already depleted budget to pay musicians for their time.⁷¹ Despite widespread skepticism, the orchestra was able to piece together the necessary funds, in part due to the continued and selfless support of Schuman and Whitney. Upon learning of the orchestra's predicament, the composer offered to return his conducting fee and insisted on purchasing his own tickets to the Carnegie Hall concert.⁷² Whitney did the same, and as I will discuss shortly, the Mercury recording was the first of many albums produced under the auspices of the NMP.

The pursuant concert at Carnegie Hall, scheduled for 29 December 1950, presented no less of a challenge to the orchestra, which worked closely with Charles E.

⁷⁰ In a telegram dated 28 November 1950, Schuman and Hall disclosed the bad news: "We have spent many hours attempting to piece together a recording of "Judith" which would fairly represent the Louisville Orchestra, the composition, and Mercury Records. We have come to the reluctant conclusion that it would be unthinkable to issue this in so poor a performance and recording. Mercury Records is willing to undertake the recording expenses of another session provided that as before the cost of the orchestra is born by the Louisville Philharmonic Society" (Ibid.).

⁷¹ Despite the support and encouragement of Schuman and Hall, Woolford and the orchestra's board remained crestfallen regarding the possibility of financing another recording session. In a letter dated 30 November 1950, Woolford confessed "We wish we could share Bill's [William Schuman] and your [David Hall's] confidence that a way will be found to finance the extra session in New York.... Mary Helen [Byck, board president] and I spent most of yesterday going over our own Orchestra budget which was made strictly from fright last Spring when we all but closed down completely. We can't find any item(s) on which we can cut down appreciably in order to finance the extra session from our own budget. So where we go from here is anyone's guess at the moment" Discussion catalogued in board meeting minutes suggests that, while musicians may have been willing to play the extra session without pay, the local union refused to let them do so (Ibid.).

⁷² As stated in a 30 November 1950 telegram (Ibid.).

Figure 3.5 Ad for Carnegie Hall Concert (notice the misspelling of “Claude Almand”)⁷³

FRIDAY EVE., DEC. 29—CARNEGIE HALL
The LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA
ROBERT WHITNEY, Conductor VIRGIL THOMSON, Guest Conductor
in a program of new American works by
CLAUDE ALMOND • DAVID DIAMOND • BOHUSLAV MARTINU
VINCENT PERSICHETTI • WILLIAM SCHUMAN • VIRGIL THOMSON
Soloist MARTHA GRAHAM
TICKETS and MAIL ORDERS NOW ON SALE AT CARNEGIE HALL
PRICES: \$4.20, 3.40, 3.00, 2.40, 1.80, 1.50, TAX INCLUDED
BOX OFFICE ONLY

New York Philharmonic or another national-level orchestra could have repreremiered *Judith*, but Schuman and Martha Graham agreed that the Louisville Orchestra must travel to New York to perform the work. The composer wrote in the *Courier-Journal* that, although the Louisville Orchestra “never can sound as strong and full as some of the mightier Eastern Orchestras, ... I’ve never had my works better performed than in Louisville. This orchestra gives more study, more real understanding of the works, and if you’ll pardon the expression, they give more love to them.”⁷⁴ Schuman even made sure to prepare audiences in New York for the orchestra’s visit, writing in the Christmas Eve edition of *The New York Times* that “there is no question in the minds of those who guide the destiny of this orchestra that the health of an art demands continuing nourishment at the course—which means creation.”⁷⁵ This praise was echoed by none other than Charles Farnsley, who was invited by *The New York Herald-Tribune*’s Virgil Thomson to write a

⁷³ Reproduced in Ibid.

⁷⁴ William Schuman, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 20 September 1950.

⁷⁵ William Schuman, “Louisville Policy: Orchestra Has Made Habit of Commissioning Works,” *The New York Times*, 24 December 1950: 47.

special piece outlining the orchestra's unique philosophy and operating principles.⁷⁶ Thus it was no surprise when the orchestra traveled to New York and impressed critics with their tenacity, if not their artistry. The concert, which paired *Judith* with other recent commissions by Thomson, Claude Almand, David Diamond, Vincent Persichetti, and Bohuslav Martinu,⁷⁷ was deemed a rousing success, prompting critics to shower praise on the orchestra's commitment to new music, which put New York's own "to shame."⁷⁸ Schuman later wrote a glowing review for *Time Magazine*, reinforcing his belief that the orchestra's devotion to new music represented Louisville's single greatest achievement to date.⁷⁹

The unforeseen success of *Judith* brought unexpected consequences, including interest from the U.S. State Department, which began to broadcast the orchestra's performances as a means of combating communist propaganda, which depicted the American hinterland "as an uncouth, uncultured, barbaric technocracy."⁸⁰ Although the

⁷⁶ Charles Farnsley, Article in *The New York Herald-Tribune*, 24 December 1950.

⁷⁷ The full program featured Claude Almand's *John Gilbert: A Steamboat Overture*, David Diamond's *Timon of Athens—A Symphonic Portrait after Shakespeare*, Bohuslav Martinu's *Intermezzo* (world premiere performance), Virgil Thomson's *Wheatfield at Noon*, Vincent Persichetti's *Serenade No. 5 for Orchestra*, and William Schuman's *Judith* (Box 73: Correspondence, 1950–51, Folder: Carnegie Hall Concert, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁷⁸ Louis Biencolli, Review in *The New York World Telegram*, 30 December 1950. Positive reviews also appeared in *The New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times*.

⁷⁹ Schuman sent an unabridged version of the article to board president Mary Helen Byck, as editors of the magazine shortened the review out of space considerations. To read the full letter, see Box 71: Correspondence, 1944–51, Folder: Mrs. Byck (Campaign Committee, 1950–51), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁸⁰ An untitled editorial in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* dated 30 January 1953 discusses the perhaps unintended role played by the NMP in Cold War politics: "The State Department, through its Voice of America [program], wants the Louisville Orchestra to help combat Communist propaganda abroad. As the Voice's chief of musical services, Walter Ducloux, explained it earlier this week, 'the communist line is to depict America as an uncouth, uncultured, barbaric technocracy.' According to this interpretation, New York, Boston and Philadelphia do have great orchestras, but all the U.S. hinterland jumps to the tune of the jukebox. Mr. Ducloux and the orchestra's manager, Richard Wangerin, have been talking about how to get music from Louisville into Europe or Asia to prove this isn't so. The orchestra's contribution to contemporary music and composing may thus expand into a contribution to freedom everywhere" (reproduced in Box 141: Commissioning Project, File: State Department—United States Information Agency (1951–54), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

work itself was never intended as a political statement, its subsequent politicization by the federal government indicates the cultural heft afforded to orchestral repertoire and institutions in the mid-twentieth century. Yet while audiences abroad were singing the orchestra's praises, local patrons sang a different tune. Despite the fact that newly commissioned music took up only one-fifth of most concert programs—a detail stipulated in the commissioning contracts—Louisvillians found it difficult to accept new music in such concentrated doses. Although standard orchestral repertoire was still performed on most concerts, with the lack of another professional ensemble in town and the limited number of concerts given by the Louisville Orchestra, conservative audience members found themselves trapped. According to one anonymous patron,

For several years now, the Louisville Orchestra and contemporary composers have had a very pleasant working relationship.... We have never questioned the validity of the Louisville Orchestra playing contemporary music.... We do maintain, however, that it is time for Robert Whitney and his cohort to re-examine the orchestra's responsibility to its audience.... Let Robert Whitney and his board of directors be warned. The first result of such a loss of faith will be a withdrawal of support at the box office. In the long run, the ticket buyer still holds the balance of power.⁸¹

A local music critic echoed these sentiments, remarking that “despite its international fame, the Louisville Orchestra is in much the same predicament as the prophet not

⁸¹ Anonymous Letter to the Editor, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 13 February 1952. This letter was likely written in response to another anonymous letter published less than a week earlier, which defended the orchestra's support of new music, arguing that “very few people limit their reading to classical literature. If they did so, they would have little conception of modern trends of thought...I grant you there is a thrill in hearing an old favorite in the music hall, but won't our *cultural background be broadened* [emphasis mine] if we are given the opportunity to hear some of the lesser-known works of past centuries as well as those which are part and parcel of our own times? Do we want a static organization playing a limited repertory, or do we want a group of alive and alert musicians who are able to enrich our lives and broaden our appreciation?” Given the language used, the author was very likely Whitney himself (*Louisville Courier-Journal*, 8 February 1952).

without honor save in his own country.”⁸²

The orchestra’s own administration was once again split on how best to combat the local apathy surrounding the commissioning project. Richard H. Wangerin, who had replaced Woolford as the orchestra’s manager in 1952, noted that “in contrast to other cities, [our audiences] do not complain about the programming of a contemporary work but rather advance their opinion of the work itself and its appeal or lack of appeal.”⁸³ Indeed, Whitney and his supporters saw the NMP as both an artistic and civic achievement that helped to shape the country’s taste for new music. With Farnsley’s continued guidance, they hoped to leverage recent developments in sound recording technology to attract new audiences, create sustainable revenue streams, and place the orchestra on stable organizational footing once and for all. Other members of the board insisted that the NMP—and the orchestra more generally—could not truly succeed without substantial support from within its own community. Indeed, more than one board member believed that the orchestra “should be able to sell 1000 tickets in Louisville ... or else quit.”⁸⁴ If the orchestra’s commitment to new music was to continue, it would first have to reconcile its vision, as laid out by Whitney and Farnsley, with the practical realities of the symphonic world.

The Rockefeller Foundation Pledges its Support, 1953–58

Although the remarkable success of *Judith* helped to raise the Louisville

Orchestra’s reputation among the country’s musical elite, financial insolvency continued

⁸² William Mootz. “First Year of Rockefeller Commission Series Has Put Louisville Orchestra on World Music Map,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, Dec. 26, 1954.

⁸³ Written in a letter to Charles Farnsley, dated 22 January 1953 (Box 142: Commissioning Project, Folder: Mayor Charles Farnsley, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives. Wangerin was hired after a season-long stint that saw the orchestra without a full-time manager. During that time, the board temporarily hired W.R. Dunton, III as a part-time administrator.

⁸⁴ Quoting Mr. Willis from a 1949 board meeting (Ibid.).

to plague its day-to-day operations. Only a year after its greatest triumph, the orchestra “was having money troubles again. [We] barely squeaked through the office payroll on the 15th.... His Honor [Charles Farnsley] is out now trying to squeeze funds out of various firms and individuals. It certainly seems like old times.”⁸⁵ One of the firms Farnsley approached was the Rockefeller Foundation, which had expressed interest in the NMP as early as September 1952. In November of that year, the orchestra presented some new program ideas to John Marshall, associate director of the Foundation’s Humanities Division, and by February they were invited to submit a formal funding proposal.⁸⁶ That proposal, drafted by Farnsley and vetted by Marshall, Virgil Thomson, and others, was as unprecedented as it was audacious, asking for \$400,356 to drastically expand the scope of the NMP and fund an extensive recording project with Columbia Records. The most recent arts-related grant bestowed by the Rockefeller Foundation had come in 1939 for Serge Koussevitzky’s Berkshire Music Festival, and amounted only to \$60,000—less than a sixth of amount requested by Louisville. Thomson, who was of course an early proponent of the commissioning project, opined that the orchestra’s proposal

Seems to [be] most intelligently conceived, and certainly Mayor Farnsley is capable of making it work. I can find no flaw in it. It seems to me designed to strengthen the weakest element in the contemporary music scene ... and also to strengthen the symphony orchestra at its weakest point, which is its dependence on “name” soloists for attracting the public.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Excerpted from a 16 February 1951 letter from Woolford to board president Mary Helen Byck (Box 71: Correspondence, 1949–51, Folder: Mrs. Byck (Campaign Committee, 1950–51), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁸⁶ Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Correspondence w/ Rockefeller Fndn., 1952–April 1953, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives).

⁸⁷ 8 January 1953 letter to John Marshall, reproduced in *Ibid.*

On 3 April 1953, after months of behind-the-scenes negotiations, Farnsley was once again able to accomplish what no one else could, securing the future of the New Music Project with a groundbreaking \$400,000 gift from the Rockefeller Foundation.⁸⁸

The massive grant, to be used over a four-year period, led to a 300% growth in the orchestra's annual budget, allowing musician salaries to skyrocket and inspiring a marked improvement in artistic quality.⁸⁹ The grant proposal itself suggests that those in charge of managing the orchestra and the commissioning project had taken a great deal of care in thinking about how best to sell the project to funders and audiences. In Farnsley's own words,

The purpose of the project [was] to foster the creation of musical works by contemporary composers; to stimulate interest in the creative aspects of music; to add to the library of existing music; to insure commissioned music the repeated hearings necessary for the proper assimilation of new compositions; to make such new music available for enjoyment by the free world, and to inform the free world of progressive action in America in the music field.⁹⁰

Indeed, the document makes an insightful argument for self-sufficiency, outlining how the orchestra planned to make the project financially and artistically sustainable over time.

According to the proposal, up to forty-six works would be commissioned each year by a small committee consisting of Whitney, Dwight Anderson, and Gerhard Herz, a

⁸⁸ Farnsley's singular role in obtaining funds from the Rockefeller Foundation is contested in an interview between Whitney and composer William Schuman, who plainly states that "Some years ago, I went to the foundation and just said you really have to do a serious job about recording Louisville, that's about the only place us composers get recorded" (Box C, Folder C, Robert Whitney Oral History, University of Louisville Archives).

⁸⁹ The improved quality of the orchestra can be heard clearly on their recordings (released on Columbia and First Edition). During the first year of the Rockefeller grant, the orchestra's base salary was set at \$2,397.50, with many musicians receiving substantially more (Audited Financial Statements (1953–54), Louisville Orchestra Collection, University of Louisville Archives).

⁹⁰ The complete proposal is reproduced in Jeanne Belfy, "The Commissioning Project of the Louisville Orchestra, 1948–1958: A Study of the History and Music," PhD Thesis, University of Kentucky, 1986.

musicologist from the University of Louisville. Minutes from the committee's informal meetings provide a fascinating lens into how decisions were made and why certain composers were chosen over others (see Figure 3.6). Once completed, each new commission would be rehearsed and performed four times over the course of a month on weekly Saturday matinee concerts, increasing both potential ticket sales and audience familiarity with the new works while providing gainful employment to orchestra musicians for an expanded 46-week season.⁹¹ Each matinee concert would consist of three recently commissioned works and a new world premiere, ensuring four public readings of every commission and “thereby ensuring each new work the repeated hearings so necessary for ... proper assimilation.”⁹² Twelve of the forty-six works were to be composed by students, and a third of the remaining commissions were to be written by non-U.S.-based composers. Each composer would continue to be paid \$1000 per commission (\$500 for students), though the Rockefeller funds allowed for an additional \$200 to prepare orchestra parts.⁹³ After receiving at least four performances, newly commissioned works would then be recorded by Columbia Records and distributed to audiences around the world.

⁹¹ The practice of offering multiple performances of new works, while novel, was rooted in an earlier experiment hatched by Whitney: the immediate repetition of certain new works so that the audience could better understand and appreciate them. For instance, on a program from February 1953—several months before receiving the Rockefeller grant—Whitney included a note stating that, “In response to many requests for an early re-hearing of the commissioned works, [I have] programmed a second playing of the Chavez Symphony No. 4 on this program” (reproduced in Box 197: Programs 1937–75, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

⁹² Quoted from the grant proposal, reproduced in Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Rockefeller Foundation Proposal, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives).

⁹³ In late 1954, the commissioning fee was raised to \$1,200.

Figure 3.6 Minutes from a Meeting of the Commission Recommendation Committee⁹⁴

LOUISVILLE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY, INC.
 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION COMMITTEE
 Minutes of Listening Session
 August 3, 1956

PRESENT: Messrs. Herz and Whitney

They listened to recordings by the following composers:

<u>COMPOSER</u>	<u>COMPOSITION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Josef Tal	"A Mother Rejoices" Cantata for Chorus and Orch.	Uneven and undistinguished
Oedoen Partos	"Song of Praise" for violin & Orch.	Rather good, expert, effective
Bernd Bergel	"Divertimento for Orch".	Judges not impressed
Ben Haym	"Suite, Op. 34"	recommended for a commission
(the above composers were Israel composers - the judges liked Haym first and Partos second)		
Benjamin Frankel	"Violin concerto"	Recommended for a commission
Robert Starer	"Symphony No. 2"	Rejected for commission
Frank Wigglesworth	"Symphony No. 1"	Rejected for commission
Willis Charkovsky		Rejected for commission

Financial success hinged largely on the recording component of the project, which aimed to sell one thousand recording subscriptions at \$65 apiece (nearly \$525 in 2010 dollars) and served as an implicit strategies to overcome the economic challenges associated with such an expansive program.⁹⁵ Farnsley estimated that record subscriptions would grow from 1000 to 4000 between 1954 and 1958, and the revenue produced—over \$260,000— would be augmented by a yearly “Best Of” disc that would be marketed on Columbia’s national label, selling upwards of 10,000 copies. The overall financial plan purported to transform the project into a self-sustaining venture, aiming to

⁹⁴ Reproduced in Box 141: Commissioning Project, Folder: Minutes of Committee Meetings, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives.

⁹⁵ For inflation calculator, see <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>.

Figure 3.7 Handwritten cover page from the first Saturday matinee concert, 2 Jan. 1954⁹⁶

The Louisville Orchestra

Robert Whitney, Conductor

in

Public Readings
of its

Commissions

COLUMBIA AUDITORIUM

January 2, 1954

3:00 P.M.

shrink contributions from the Rockefeller Foundation and other supporters by \$180,000 over the course of four years by increasing revenue through record sales.⁹⁷ These speculations were based on a widely held assumption that “An over-supply or exhaustion of the classical repertoire can never happen ... [and] the field of modern music hasn’t been touched. New talent in coming as well as in performing [is] constantly coming up.

⁹⁶ Reproduced in Box 145: Commissioning Project, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

⁹⁷ These figures are drawn from the grant proposal itself, which projected expenses of approximately \$272,000 and \$322,000 in years one and four, respectively. Projected income for the project started at \$80,000 and was proposed to grow to \$311,000 by year four, reducing deficits from \$192,399 to \$11,459 (see Appendix D of proposal, reproduced in Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Rockefeller Foundation Proposal, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives).

All these mean ever-fresh markets.”⁹⁸ As I discuss later in this chapter, however, these projections were not only idealistic but grossly inaccurate, resulting in an unenviable financial shortfall that the Rockefeller Foundation had internally predicted.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the sheer quantity of new artistic work produced under the auspices of the NMP is staggering. During the ten-year lifespan of the project, 137 works were commissioned and premiered by the orchestra, and no fewer than 111 were recorded (see Figure 6.1 and 6.2 in the Appendix for a full list of commissioned and recorded works).¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that only 59 of the commissions were funded by the Rockefeller Foundation grant; the rest were commissioned independently, and thus were featured on the orchestra’s evening subscription series. Figure 3.8 provides a breakdown of how the orchestra’s programming strategies changed over the course of the New Music Project (please note that only subscription programming is considered here, and thus data from the Rockefeller-funded matinee series is not incorporated). The orchestra’s first full season (1937–38) is represented in the table, as is the last season before the NMP (1947–48), the first season of the project (1948–49), and the years surrounding the project’s eventual decline in 1958. I have also included relevant data from the orchestra’s 2009–10 season, as well as the national averages computed by orchestra historian John

⁹⁸ Quoting Remy Van Byck Farkas of London Gramophone in a 4 February 1953 issue of *Variety* (reproduced in *Ibid.*).

⁹⁹ In a 3 February 1953 letter to Mary Helen Byck, John Marshall expressed concern over the proposal’s financial figures, pointing out that such estimates “must be to a considerable degree speculative. With the financial prospects of the project so much hinging on them, it would seem to us useful if the Society could now give us some rationale of these estimates of income, particularly, of course, from the sale of tickets and, even more important, from recordings” (Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Correspondence w/ Rockefeller Fndn., 1952–April 1953, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives).

¹⁰⁰ Box 203: Commissioning Project Records; Folder: Louisville Orchestra Commissions (1948–67), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

Figure 3.8 Breakdown of Louisville Orchestra Subscription Concert Programming

	1937-38	1947-48	1948-49	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60	2009-10	U.S. Average (1945)
Period								
Baroque	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	2 (8%)	2 (9%)	2 (10%)	3 (13%)		
Classical	4 (14%)	2 (6%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	2 (10%)	2 (9%)	4 (13.8%)	
Romantic	16 (55%)	19 (56%)	13 (50%)	12 (52%)	8 (40%)	10 (43%)	9 (31.0%)	
Twentieth Century	8 (28%)	10 (29%)	3 (12%)	2 (9%)	1 (5%)	2 (9%)	15 (51.7%)	~15%
Commission/Premiere			6 (22%)	6 (26%)	6 (30%)			
Previous Commission					1 (5%)	6 (26%)	1 (3.4%)	
Composer Nationality								
Austro-German	14 (48%)	21 (64%)	10 (35%)	11 (52%)	10 (50%)	8 (36%)	11 (37.9%)	52%
Russian	2 (7%)	3 (9%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	3 (15%)		3 (10.3%)	15%
French	5 (18%)		1 (4%)	2 (9%)		4 (17%)	2 (6.9%)	13%
Italian	3 (10%)		5 (19%)		3 (15%)	4 (17%)	3 (10.3%)	9%
American	4 (14%)	4 (12%)	4 (15%)	5 (22%)	2 (10%)	5 (22%)	5 (17.2%)	5%
English		2 (6%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)		1 (4%)		2%
Other	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	5 (19%)	2 (9%)	2 (10%)	1 (4%)	5 (17.2%)	4%

Mueller in 1945.¹⁰¹ Besides the obvious increase in newly commissioned works, it is difficult to decipher any other major shifts in the orchestra's programming. Perhaps most interestingly, the newly commissioned compositions did not detract from the performance of nineteenth-century masterworks, but instead replaced performances of earlier twentieth-century works by Stravinsky, Bartók, and others. And, while the NMP reached its peak in the 1950s during the height of American composers' fascination with serialism, the works commissioned represented a diverse array of styles and traditions, and many were composed in a neo-tonal vein.¹⁰² In a letter to Dutch composer Henk Badings regarding the desired aesthetic of commissioned works, Whitney insisted that, "though we do have some experimental pieces, [we] are not deliberately searching for them. Since the recording of your work will make it available, we hope, to a large audience, it would seem to me that fact might be borne in mind."¹⁰³

The NMP might thus be understood as a reflection of the tension enacted between new music and the functional realities of the American orchestra, which was not exempt from the basic laws of supply and demand determined by concertgoers. Yet despite continued pushback from listeners, several NMP commissions went on to garner critical and popular appeal. Audiences cheered Aaron Copland's *Orchestral Variations* (1957, based on his 1930 *Piano Variations*) and applauded the dissonant premiere of Lukas

¹⁰¹ John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1951).

¹⁰² In an undated letter to subscriber Nat Baron, someone (presumably Richard Wangerin) responds to a complaint about Louisville's modern programming: "When we issued commissions with funds provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, our selection committee made a conscious effort to attempt to make our series a true cross section of the top musical creative art of the free world today. It attempted to have works from the atonal composer, the experimental composer, neo-classic, etc. We do not have too much music that falls into the "experimental" category because much of this does not call for symphony orchestra and therefore wasn't appropriate for us to commission and record" (Box 201: Records Relating to the Philharmonic Society, 1937–68, Folder: Louisville Philharmonic Society Correspondence, 1959–64, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹⁰³ Robert Whitney Papers (May 1954), University of Louisville Archives.

Foss' *A Parable of Death*, although it took two back-to-back performances to convince listeners of the work's merit.¹⁰⁴ More than a few prominent composers—including Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, Ernest Bloch, Benjamin Britten, Howard Hanson, Carl Orff, Francis Poulenc, and Igor Stravinsky—expressed interest in the project but declined commissions due to scheduling conflicts.¹⁰⁵ Conductors also recognized the extraordinary achievements of Whitney and his orchestra. Dimitri Mitropoulos of the New York Philharmonic wrote to congratulate the orchestra on its “unique achievements in Louisville ... which have had repercussions all over the world,”¹⁰⁶ and in a letter dated 21 January 1953, Whitney remarked to his coconspirator Charles Farnsley that “our new works are no longer accepted in the spirit of tolerant resignation but with a marked degree of anticipation and in many cases real enthusiasm.”¹⁰⁷ This shift was paralleled by a significant uptick in the orchestra's artistic profile, prompting *Down Beat* magazine to name Louisville the “Best Minor Orchestra in America.”¹⁰⁸

First Edition and the End of the NMP

Despite these impressive accomplishments, the NMP proved too expansive and radical to last. The orchestra was confronted with an overextended operating model that was ill equipped to reconcile the significant costs associated with commissioning and

¹⁰⁴ As described in Birkhead, *The History of the Orchestra in Louisville*, 1977.

¹⁰⁵ Stravinsky was approached at least three times by the orchestra, and reportedly agreed to a \$5000 commissioning fee, only to ask for an additional \$2000, which prompted the orchestra to cancel the contract. In a 28 February 1949 letter to John Woolford, New York Philharmonic manager Bruno Zirato wrote that, “Between you, me and the lamppost, I know that the offer is not attractive enough for him. I tried to do my best, but I failed completely. He is not interested in coming to Louisville” (Box 141: Commissioning Project Records, Folder: Commissions Refused, 1948–58, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville).

¹⁰⁶ Undated letter in Robert Whitney's papers, University of Louisville Archives.

¹⁰⁷ January 1953, Robert Whitney papers, University of Louisville Archives.

¹⁰⁸ According to the poll, the “Best Major Orchestras” were Philadelphia, Boston, and NBC (in that order), while the “Best Minor Orchestras” consisted of Louisville, Houston, and Pittsburgh. Thanks to Nathan Platte for bringing this reference to my attention (“Classics Poll,” *Down Beat Magazine*, 3 June 1953).

recording new works. The economic realities of the NMP were magnified by the orchestra's nonprofit structure, which relied on a relatively stagnant donor base to cover the ever-increasing costs associated with live performance. Less than a year after the Rockefeller Foundation grant was initiated, it became clear that, even with marginal increases in patron satisfaction, the costs associated with commissioning and recording new works continued to be prohibitive.

Despite reports to the contrary, attendance at the orchestra's Saturday matinee series hovered between 100 and 200 audience members—less than one fifth the number predicted in Farnsley's Rockefeller proposal.¹⁰⁹ Figure 3.9 displays a sales report from a typical matinee concert, reporting only \$30.30 in ticket sales from 67 patrons. The revenue stream provided by the orchestra's recording series was just as disappointing, producing less than \$800 in royalties during the first half of 1954.¹¹⁰ As of October 12, the orchestra had only sold 91 subscriptions, prompting the board to admit that “the results ... have been so disappointing as to seriously imperil the series and in less than four years it could die of its own weight.”¹¹¹ The paucity of local support was especially

¹⁰⁹ Farnsley predicted attendance would rise from 300 to 900 over the course of the Rockefeller Foundation grant period (Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Rockefeller Foundation Proposal (Appendix D), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives). Actual attendance numbers were variously reported in the popular media (see, for example, William Nootz. “First Year of Rockefeller Commission Series Has Put Louisville Orchestra on World Music Map,” *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, 26 December 1954). These statistics were often exaggerated, with one local advocate going so far as to suggest that “more persons paid to hear the Louisville Orchestra's music this year than paid to see the University of Louisville's basketball team” (Richard Harwood, undated *Louisville Times* clipping from 1954–55, in Robert Whitney's papers, University of Louisville Archives).

¹¹⁰ Announced at a 10 September 1954 board meeting (Box 81 Correspondence, 1954-55, Folder: Board Minutes, 1954, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹¹¹ Concerns voiced at a 12 October 1954 board meeting (Ibid.).

Figure 3.9: Sales Report for Saturday Matinee Concert, 11 June 1955¹¹²

TICKET REPORTS
SATURDAY SERIES

DATE June 11, 1955

	STARTING SERIAL NUMBER	TICKETS SOLD @ 50¢	TICKETS SOLD @ 20¢	COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS @ 50¢ @ 20¢	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	TOTAL NET RECEIPTS
	<i>adult</i>	<i>80 7526</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>child</i>	<i>000401</i>			<i>+ 1 pass</i>		

COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS TO:

Dwight Anderson - 1
Mrs. Whitney - 1
Mr. Lees - 1
Shawnee's Women's Club - 1

astounding, with only ten records purchased by Louisville residents.¹¹³ By early 1955, less than twelve months into the Rockefeller grant period, it had become clear that the allotted funds would cover only two years of the project's operating costs.

¹¹² Reproduced in Box 142: Commissioning Project, Folder: Ticket Reports, Saturday Series (Jan. 2, 1954–Dec. 15, 1956), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville.

¹¹³ This figure does not include the fourteen orders received from orchestra board members, staff, and musicians (Ibid.).

Despite inspiring new artistic accomplishments and positive press, the NMP was once again at a crossroads. Whitney feared the organizational consequences of a potential collapse:

The termination of the project will cause the orchestra and it's [sic] performances to suffer materially. If we go back to 5 pair of concerts a year we will lose some of our better players. One important aspect of the project is that by playing and recording this much music we do have a professional orchestra and we should try to maintain it.¹¹⁴

The project's termination would endanger more than just the artistic wellbeing of the orchestra, however. Farnsley and other members of the board believed that they benefited from the government's use of Louisville recordings as a political tool. Indeed, if the project was to end, they feared it would "give the communists a most potent anti-U.S. propaganda weapon."¹¹⁵ National security concerns aside, many observers remained invested in the successful continuation of the NMP.

By mid-March, Charles Fahs of the Rockefeller Foundation voiced his own concerns regarding the project's sustainability in a letter to Richard Wangerin:

I do not wish to add to your problems, but I think I should say that at some time before your next budget is submitted to us we should appreciate having some sort of summary statement from you as to where you think you stand with regard to the four-year project. The accounting is complicated, and I realize that some of the anticipated income is deferred. My general impression, however, is that your income has been far from coming up to expectations and despite very real effort at your end, the deficits are running at a level which raises some question as to your ability to carry the project through the four years originally planned¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Taken from the minutes of a 15 February 1955 board meeting (Box 84 Correspondence, 1955–56, Folder: Board Minutes, 1955, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹¹⁵ Minutes from 15 March 1955 board meeting (Ibid.).

¹¹⁶ Letter dated 14 March 1955, reproduced in Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Correspondence w/Rockefeller Fndn., April 1953–Sept. 1955, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives.

Wangerin's response confirmed Fahs' anxiety; with more than two-and-a-half years left in the original grant cycle, the orchestra had spent nearly \$325,000 in Rockefeller funds.¹¹⁷ As it had done countless times before, the orchestra's board approached "the only person who [could] make the project succeed."¹¹⁸ Charles Farnsley had continued to cast a long shadow over the orchestra and the NMP in particular, but the board felt that his day-to-day leadership was necessary if the orchestra was to survive its current crisis. Although he at first refused their request to become board president, Farnsley eventually acquiesced, and began to try and address the fundamental challenges confronting the NMP.¹¹⁹

First, he dissolved the orchestra's partnership with Columbia, choosing instead to record commissioned works on an independent label cleverly titled First Edition. The orchestra had for some time been "receiving a number of complaints about the quality of the records,"¹²⁰ and faithful subscribers alleged that Louisville was being "victimized by some of Columbia's usual poor mixture or pressing techniques."¹²¹ To launch First

¹¹⁷ Wangerin went on to insist that, "although it may sound premature, ... we already feel that the results have demonstrated very graphically that the project was a worthy one and the money, time and effort expended definitely worthwhile" (from a letter dated 24 March 1955, *Ibid.*).

¹¹⁸ Quoted from the minutes of a 11 April 1955 board meeting (Box 84: Correspondence, 1955-56, Folder: Board Minutes (1955), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹¹⁹ In an unprecedented step, the board "declined to accept the statement of Mr. Charles P. Farnsley, that he is unable to serve as President of the Society; that the Board of Directors hereby go on record as earnestly urging Mr. Farnsley to reconsider; and that a Committee be appointed to wait on Mr. Farnsley and impress upon him these desires of the Board that he accept this nomination as President." Unfortunately for the orchestra, Farnsley resigned on 11 November 1955, soon after he had secured a second grant from the Rockefeller Foundation (*Ibid.*).

¹²⁰ Quoting a letter (dated 1 April 1955) from Wangerin to Elinor Adler, secretary at Columbia (Box 83: Correspondence, 1954-55, Folder: Columbia Records, 1954-55, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹²¹ Taken from a letter written by Michael H. Levy of New York on 19 July 1955 (reproduced in Box 84: Correspondence, 1955-56, Folder: Columbia Records, 1955-56, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76-017), University of Louisville Archives).

Edition and continue commissioning new works, Farnsley was convinced that the orchestra needed the Rockefeller Foundation's continued support. By his own estimation,

The original plan contained two mistakes in judgment or miscalculations, namely a) the time factor was not accurately understood, with the result that expenditures have preceded anticipated income by about a one year period ... [and] b) The system of selling may have been a stumbling block to the making of more sales. A resistance has been shown by the buying public to either paying \$65.00 for the set or making a commitment for 12 record at \$5.95 each.¹²²

In a supplementary proposal to the Foundation, Farnsley requested an additional \$100,000 to continue the project on a reduced scale, producing six instead of twelve records per year and commissioning twenty-three new works each of the next two seasons.¹²³ The Foundation obliged, and the grant was announced at a 1955 Music Critics Workshop that was held in Louisville and included a lengthy consideration of the problems, successes, and failures of the commissioning project.¹²⁴ En masse, the half million dollars provided by Rockefeller included \$25,000 for advertising, \$94,000 for commissioning, \$166,000 for musician salaries, \$190,000 for recording, and \$25,000 for other expenses associated with the NMP.¹²⁵

Despite such significant levels of support, however, the final Rockefeller grant served as much as an admission of failure as a vote of confidence in the orchestra's vision. We can see this through a series of letters between Farnsley and the grant administrators at Rockefeller, which suggest through their tone, if not their content, that

¹²² Excerpted from the orchestra's second proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation (reproduced in Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Correspondence w/Rockefeller Fndn., April 1953–Sept. 1955, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, "Louisville Group Gets \$100,00 Gift," *The New York Times*, 8 October 1955: 13.

¹²⁵ Final Report to the Rockefeller Foundation (1959), Louisville Orchestra Collection, University of Louisville Archives. It should be noted that these funds did little to cover the orchestra's normal operating costs. In fact, activities associated with the Rockefeller grant were represented in a separate audit from 1954 until 1962, suggesting an ideological as well as a practical division between the New Music Project and the orchestra itself.

the foundation was losing faith in the NMP as it was initially conceived. After a meeting in New York between Farnsley, board member B. Hudson Milner, and the Rockefeller Foundation staff, the following telegram was sent to those waiting in Louisville: “No question arose as to a commitment that we would not approach the Foundation again. However I must admit that the atmosphere led me to believe that the Humanities Division was expecting to look elsewhere for places to put available moneys after this potential grant.”¹²⁶ The orchestra’s most substantial supporters gradually came to the same conclusion that the Louisville public had reached long ago: the NMP was an unsustainable venture, and despite their best efforts, Whitney and the board could “only sell the orchestra and its reputation for playing modern music and not the music itself.”¹²⁷

Starting in 1960–61, the orchestra discontinued the practice of recording newly commissioned works, choosing instead to focus on previously-written contemporary music that had never been commercially recorded. This expanded the possible repertoire immediately available to the orchestra while maintaining the project’s connection with new music, leading to acclaimed recordings of Benjamin Britten’s Violin Concerto no. 1, William Schuman’s orchestration of Ives’ *Variations on America*, and the First, Fifth, Seventh, and Eight symphonies of Walter Piston. Yet for all of the diversity represented throughout the recording project, certain marginalized communities continued to be woefully underrepresented. For instance, out of the 400-plus works recorded by the orchestra, only a few were composed by women, including Priscilla McLean and Joyce

¹²⁶ Facsimile of telegram located in Box 207: Correspondence with the Rockefeller Foundation, 1952–66, Folder: Correspondence w/Rockefeller Fndn., April 1953–Sept. 1955, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#80–113), University of Louisville Archives).

¹²⁷ Quoting Mr. Burke from a 9 December 1955 board meeting (Box 84: Correspondence, 1955–56, Folder: Board Minutes (1955), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

McKeel. In 1972, the recordings were produced in stereo for the first time, and in 1999, five decades after the original recording project had begun, Louisville remastered and released select First Edition recordings on compact disc.

Upon an aural examination of Louisville's recording catalogue, one can hear the orchestra's steady artistic improvement. Few if any ensembles could boast the extensive contemporary repertoire that Whitney and his orchestra had accumulated, and such concentrated exposure to new music kept players flexible and attentive.¹²⁸ Even with the appointment of concertmaster Sydney Harth as assistant conductor, Whitney continued to conduct the majority of commissioned works, learning literally hundreds of new scores and earning the reputation of new music specialist.¹²⁹ Whitney's passion for contemporary compositions extended well beyond the technical, however. He continued to advocate on behalf of the NMP and its intrinsic value, pointing out that

There [is] no one in the community qualified to pass judgment on a work of music from the score. A musical work ... must be heard if it is to be accepted or not, just as a painting must be seen or a book read to be judged. This creates a musical adventure for the audience. The critical opinion of the musical fraternity of the world is highly complementary of our commissioned works. Only Louisville criticizes. We have been making musical history. To tuck our tail between our legs and run now is folly.¹³⁰

Yet no matter how unflinchingly Whitney fought to secure the legacy of the commissioning project, local critics and audiences accustomed to more traditional fare.

¹²⁸ According to minutes from an 11 November 1955 board meeting, "While we are criticized for playing so much modern music, this is the factor that has made the Orchestra so much better. Dr. [Paul Henry] Lang of the New York Herald Tribune told Mr. Whitney that he had just returned from Europe and only one orchestra [there] plays contemporary music as well as the Louisville Orchestra" (Ibid.).

¹²⁹ One can get a unique perspective into Whitney's preparation process by perusing his conducting scores, which carry remarkably little annotation (see Boxes 1–14, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#86–4–2>5), University of Louisville Archives).

¹³⁰ Box 89: Correspondence, 1957–58, Folder: Board Minutes (1957), Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives.

Figure 3.10 Robert Whitney portrayed as the “Santa Claus” of new music¹³¹



forced the orchestra to scale back its commitment to contemporary music and revisit traditional programming.¹³² Private philanthropy, coupled with the perseverance of a few exceptional individuals, allowed the orchestra to experiment in its search for a new artistic model, but they did not guarantee a solution to the challenges embedded in the structure of the modern symphony orchestra. Thus in 1958, Louisville stopped actively

¹³¹ Published in the *Washington Times-Herald*, 26 December 1953.

¹³² This issue was addressed explicitly at a 10 June 1957 board meeting, when an article by William Mootz concerning the orchestra's "obsession" with new music was discussed: "It was felt that while the general tone of the article was too critical of the commissioning project, certain suggestions were valid and should be given consideration.... A general discussion was held ... concerning the possibility of adding a third concert on Friday to the regular Wednesday evening and Thursday matinee series. This concert would be identical in program with the two preceding ones except that the commissioned work would be omitted from the Friday evening concert and a standard work would be substituted" (Ibid.).

commissioning new works, and by the early 1960s the last of the Rockefeller grant had been exhausted (Figure 3.11 shows the “arc” of the commissioning project’s history).¹³³

Ten years after the NMP had been hatched by Charles Farnsley in an innocuous meeting with Robert Whitney, it faded away not with a bang but with a whimper; not even the local newspaper covered its demise.

Legacies and Lessons Learned

In an article dated 15 October 1955, Harold Schonberg, eminent critic for the *The New York Times*, summed up the strengths and weaknesses of the New Music Project:

Louisville has a problem. Any sales representative of a major record company would have laughed out loud at the mere possibility of selling enough sets of modern music, at \$65 a set, to begin to approach the sum of money desired. To say that the Louisville officials were a little naïve would be the understatement of the year. . . . On the other hand—and when discussing modern music there always is another hand—the actual merit of the music in question is less important than the fact that the composer has had a forum. . . . Whatever the final result, Louisville can glory in a stand well taken. Those responsible for the idea have fought the good fight, breaking away from the oppressive stagnation that has enveloped so many musical organizations.¹³⁴

Schonberg was not alone in his support of Louisville’s “fight” for artistic progress.¹³⁵ Indeed, the legacy of the NMP is two-fold. While the most obvious

¹³³ A financial audit by Escott, Grogan & Co. shows that, by 1958, the orchestra’s reported income (\$42,382.53 earned, \$88,760.00) had been reduced to levels below the first year of the commissioning project (see Figure 3.3) (Box 1: Audits 1934–66, Folder: Audit: March 31, 1958, Louisville Orchestra Archives (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹³⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, “Noble Effort: Louisville Does its Best for Modern Music,” *The New York Times*, 15 October 1955: x9.

¹³⁵ In a remarkable piece that likely served as an explicit “answer” to Schonberg’s article the day prior, musicologist Paul Henry Lang wrote: “It is clear that when led by able musicians and civic-minded administrators, our public is remarkably responsive, but its responsiveness must not be overtaxed. As long as most of the youth of the country receives a musical education that all but ignores the march of time, any music that is more or less beyond the experience of adult concertgoers must be introduced with considerable care; the amount of dosage becomes an important factor. . . . Perhaps on the basis of the excellent results obtained, a new policy could be inaugurated by which several orchestra in the country would share in the grant to boost their activities in this field. The commissioned works should be played on the regular concerts and not to special audiences” (Paul Henry Lang, “Experiment in Kentucky,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 16 October 1955).

Figure 3.11 Louisville Orchestra Premieres (not including student works)¹³⁶

Season	# of Premieres	American	European	Other
1948-49	6	3	3	0
1949-50	5	4	1	0
1950-51	5	3	2	0
1951-52	5	4	0	1
1952-53	3	2	0	1
1953-54	27	16	7	4
1954-55	30	12	14	4
1955-56	15	6	6	3
1956-57	7	5	1	1
1957-58	7	4	1	2
1958-59	6	1	3	2
TOTAL:	116	60	38	18
		51.70%	32.80%	15.50%

lesson learned may be that the patronage of new music by a small, regional orchestra is futile, the story presented above also suggests the inherent value embedded in the work of the Louisville Orchestra, which provided a distinct kind of social good to local and international communities of listeners. By supporting contemporary composers, the orchestra helped to generate a significant anthology of new music while urging audiences to stretch their ears, even if they did not want to.

The contested relationship between contemporary music and the symphony orchestra is reflected throughout this history, and was addressed by Richard Wangerin in the following letter to a patron who had previously expressed disillusionment with the orchestra's experimental practices:

It is a curious thing to me that the concert hall represents vitually [sic] the only place where the contemporary is actively opposed. We demand the contemporary in theater.... We buy current literature.... But in music so many of us want only the old masters. I suspect it stems at least in part

¹³⁶ This table shows that the commissioning project reached its zenith in the mid-1950s and never achieved its proposed goal of 34 non-student (46 total) works each year. Contrary to popular belief, the project was not intended to focus solely on American composers, a fact that is born out in the data presented above.

from our lack of real knowledge of music and our fear of displaying ignorance. We are sage in approving of Beethoven, but what should we say about Riegger?¹³⁷

We cannot know for sure whether Whitney, Farnsley, and the rest of the architects of the NMP viewed the project as a means of institutionalizing new music or rather as an experiment in the artistic re-branding of what was otherwise a typical regional performing arts ensemble. Whatever the intention, it seems clear that the orchestra's complexity as both a cultural and political entity made it difficult, if not impossible, to navigate a new artistic identity within the economic and organizational realities of mid-century America.

This paradox concerning the impact of the NMP continues today. Wayne Brown, who served as executive director for the orchestra in the late 1980s and early 1990s, points out that, independent of any tension with audiences, the NMP “has been a great resource for other orchestras and conductors. Kurt Masur used [the orchestra's] library while he was in New York; the recordings themselves were more about documentation. The Louisville Orchestra served as a laboratory for the industry.”¹³⁸ This was apparent as early as the 1960s, by which time over seventy orchestras in the U.S. and forty orchestras abroad had performed at least one Louisville commission; many performed more, with the New York Philharmonic presenting fifteen NMP compositions by February 1961.¹³⁹ Yet as the economic conditions necessary to try and preserve a meaningful presence in the community could no longer be based on new music, the orchestra required a vision

¹³⁷ From an undated letter to Nat Baron, a subscriber to the orchestra's record series (reproduced in Box 201: Records Relating to the Philharmonic Society, 1937–68, Folder: Louisville Philharmonic Society Correspondence, 1959–64, Louisville Orchestra Collection (#76–017), University of Louisville Archives).

¹³⁸ Excerpt from a phone interview with Wayne Brown, current Program Director for the National Endowment for the Arts, 11 March 2010.

¹³⁹ Data from a list compiled on 1 February 1961, presumably for internal purposes (Robert Whitney Papers, University of Louisville Archives).

that attracted broader community support. There is considerable evidence that suggests orchestral audiences have a historical aversion to new music, no matter what type of engagement strategies are used. Any exceptions to this rule are remarkable indeed, and deserve further study.

The orchestra's current administration has attempted to embrace and celebrate the legacy of the NMP while moving in a new direction to understand and connect with the Louisville community.¹⁴⁰ In March of 2010, an article detailing the rediscovery of the First Edition masters appeared in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*,¹⁴¹ and later that year, an independent documentary titled *Music Makes a City* was released at select theatres, sharing the remarkable success of the NMP and its cache of composers with a new generation of listeners.¹⁴² How this story speaks to the challenges of twenty-first century orchestras is particularly interesting, considering the unprecedented turmoil surrounding Louisville's recent bankruptcy filing and musician lockout.¹⁴³

To conclude, I would like to revisit the multifaceted legacy of the commissioning project as it pertains to the broader history of the symphony orchestra. Although the NMP has traditionally been described as an inexplicable aberration that achieved unequivocal success, it might instead be thought of as a collage of several overlapping projects. What

¹⁴⁰ According to CEO Robert Birman, "the success of the commissioning project ended in the mid 1960s. It was going downhill quickly. The sales of recordings were declining, and shortly after Robert Whitney left, people were sick of new music. When Jorge Mester came, he recorded new works, but never presented them to audiences" (phone interview with Robert Birman, 12 February 2010).

¹⁴¹ The masters were found in the basement of famed music producer Andrew Kazdin, who had been keeping them since the 1970s (Andrew Adler, "The Memory Keeper: Orchestra Gets Back its Recorded History," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 22 March 2010).

¹⁴² For a review of the film, see Rick Schultz, "Music Makes a City: A Film About a Little Orchestra That Could," *The Los Angeles Times Cultural Blog*, 21 September 2010. <<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2010/09/music-makes-a-city-a-film-about-louisvilles-little-orchestra-that-could.html>>

¹⁴³ For a detailed discussion of the Louisville Orchestra's most recent attempt at organizational change, which includes recruiting non-union musicians to replace those on strike, see chapter 5.

began as a self-funded experiment in commissioning new music later developed into a recording initiative that aided fundraising, improved working conditions, and raised the artistic and organizational reputation of the Louisville Orchestra, ultimately serving as a prototype for other performing arts organizations including the American Composers Orchestra, Naxos, and countless independent ensembles. Indeed, the work of Robert Whitney and Charles Farnsley challenged the function of orchestras and their relationship to new music and proved that through leadership and imagination, energy and persistence, something remarkable can be achieved.

Yet in the face of a growing international reputation, the NMP began to ostracize and alienate its own community, ignoring local tastes in favor of international press. The orchestra attempted to skirt the economic challenges it encountered by implementing a project that valued high visibility and foundation funding over audience support. In the face of declining ticket sales, the Rockefeller grants allowed the orchestra to grow artistically and organizationally, transforming a struggling regional orchestra into a vibrant producer of new music—a solution that proved unsustainable. Ultimately, this story highlights a tension surrounding the orchestra's dual function as a cultural institution: shaping taste through artistic innovation and responding to taste in an effort to appease audiences. The implications of these findings reach beyond the history of one orchestra, and shed light on how musical patronage, repertoire, and artistic reputation are shaped and at times constrained by the organizational structures and cultures in which they exist.

Chapter Four

Music For Whose Good?: El Sistema in America

Introduction

In the summer and fall of 2007, an orchestra consisting of nearly 200 Venezuelan youth traveled across the western world and back again, performing to sold out houses in London (BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall), New York (Carnegie Hall), Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, and Berlin, Germany. Led by charismatic conductor and ensemble alumnus Gustavo Dudamel, the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra took the classical music world by storm, receiving unending praise for its uncanny ability to move and sound as a “single inspired body.”¹ In stark contrast to the somber and often predictable performances orchestra audiences have come to expect, these young people danced, smiled, and waved, bending traditional definitions of artistic excellence through a sense of joy and community that is rarely present in contemporary practice. Moreover, the group boasted an impressive degree of artistic maturity that rivaled some of the top professional orchestras in America. The following scene was recounted by one New York critic:

At the conclusion of the first concert, the players changed into bright jackets in the colors of the Venezuelan flag and launched into a trio of Latin-American themed pieces.... Trumpets were raised to the sky, cellists twirled their instruments, and whole sections stood and danced while playing—all without missing a beat. The audience went wild.²

¹ Heidi Waleson, “Southern Youthquake,” in *Symphony Magazine* 59, No. 2 (March–April, 2008): 27–33.

² *Ibid.*, 27.

Audiences around the world voiced similar reactions, surrendering to “the sheer expressive potency and exuberant physicality of the performance.”³

Yet the meteoric rise of these Venezuelan musicians was not as sudden or unexpected as some news reports suggested. The orchestra and its parent program—El Sistema, or simply “the system”—had been chronicled in a feature length documentary (*Tocar y Luchar*, 2006) and championed by symphonic superstars such as Claudio Abbado and Simon Rattle since at least 2000. What’s more, the flagship Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra is only one of over 125 ensembles operating throughout Venezuela, reflecting a radical initiative that redefines the tenets of music education through the lens of social justice. Originally conceived as a means of social reformation for the nation’s poorest youth, El Sistema (known more formally as *Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de las Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela*, or FESNOJIV) has since become a global phenomenon that offers new evaluative measures for orchestral performance. The program’s success, both artistically and socially, continues to garner praise from music educators, administrators, and arts lovers who recognize the tremendous impact the program’s alumni are having in concert halls and classrooms around the globe. Dudamel, who currently leads both the Gothenburg Symphony (Principal Conductor) and Los Angeles Philharmonic (Music Director), is just one of the El Sistema’s remarkable musical exports; 17 year-old double bassist Edicson Ruiz became the youngest-ever member of the Berlin Philharmonic in 2007, and violinist Alexis Cárdenas has gone on to an international career as a soloist.

³ Jeremy Eichler, “Catching the Upbeat to a New Movement.” *The Boston Globe*, 25 June 2010.

One could argue, however, that El Sistema's impact on Venezuelan culture has been even more significant, enriching the lives of over 300,000 children since the program's inception in 1975. The vast network of youth orchestras has served as a powerful nationalist symbol, proving to a generation of impoverished youth that social mobility is indeed possible. For the country's children and their families and communities, the program represents not an inflexible system but an all-encompassing philosophy rooted in a series of best practices that were born from years of experimentation. Yet despite El Sistema's ascent to the top of the classical music world, little is known about the movement's complex history.⁴ Although several scholars have published on the topic, none has addressed the link between the movement's social and musical function and the symphony orchestra.⁵ In addition to providing a historical overview of El Sistema in its original context, this chapter explores how organizations in other nations—especially the U.S.—have begun to adapt various aspects of the program for their own purposes. The objective here is two-fold: to problematize the use of classical music as a universal vehicle for social action, and to interrogate who exactly is benefiting from this work in its American context—underserved youth or the ailing orchestra industry itself.

⁴ According to Stephanie Scherpf, former Managing Director of El Sistema USA, "When the [American student] fellows were visiting with Dr. Abreu last year, and he was introducing El Sistema, he explained the irony of the name "El Sistema," since the original name was much longer. He launched into his whole talk about how it is not a system at all.... It may not be a system, but certain things start to repeat themselves, and with a lot of study, you can begin to see the throughlines of practical applications. We have materials that the fellows brought back from Venezuela last year, but there's really no guidebook. From what I've been told, no one ever wants to write anything done, because then it becomes obsolete. And that's really the spirit of El Sistema, the constant evolution and aspiring toward best practices" (Interview with Stephanie Scherpf, 28 February 2011).

⁵ For previous scholarship pertaining to El Sistema, see Jennifer Diana Mei-Lynn Chang, "Orchestrating an "Affluence of Spirit": Addressing Self-Esteem in Impoverished Venezuelan Children through Music Education" (B.A. Honors Thesis, Harvard University, March 2007), Mina Yang, "El Sistema, L.A.-Style: Music Education and Social Activism in the Twenty-first Century" (conference paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, 2010), and Tricia Tunstall, *Changing Lives: Gustavo Dudamel, El Sistema, and the Transformative Power of Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, forthcoming).

Although the choice of European classical music as a driver for social change highlights Venezuela's complex relationship with its own colonialist history, the values and rhetoric employed through El Sistema have made it an attractive tool for ambitious music educators and arts administrators. In the U.S., the project's socialist mantra of artistic excellence through communal action has been transformed into a battle cry for fundraisers and managers looking to redefine the role of classical music in contemporary society. El Sistema-inspired initiatives that have developed here include YOLA (Youth Orchestra Los Angeles, a program of the LA Philharmonic), OrchKids (a program of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra), and El Sistema USA, which was founded as an arm of the New England Conservatory's Preparatory Division in 2009. All of these initiatives represent a radical departure from both traditional music education programs and accepted symphonic practice.

Yet the original vision for El Sistema, rooted in the selfless dedication of student, family, and community, does not easily map onto the practices of contemporary Western culture. The routines and priorities embedded in American orchestral life often conflict with the philosophy embodied by El Sistema, which emphasizes social responsibility and communal experience over artistic genius and technical perfection. Such innovations signify a fundamental shift in ideology that, if adopted, would not only alter performance routines, but transform what it means to be an orchestra. This chapter explodes the notion of structure to explore the broader logics that shape institutional identities and influence artistic practice. Due to the lack of documentary evidence addressing the movement's history and its relatively recent adoption by orchestras in the U.S., my argument is based primarily on conversations and interviews with various music educators, administrators,

and musicians who are a part of the El Sistema movement in America. This data is supplemented by my observations of three El Sistema-inspired programs during the spring and summer of 2011. Together these findings highlight the tension between the program's grassroots, community-based structure and the more traditional, top-down management practices employed by most professional performing arts organizations.

Connecting what was first envisioned as a social movement to the bureaucratic setting of the symphony orchestra leads to a number of interesting questions regarding organizational structure, identity, and artistic excellence. One might argue that certain orchestra managers see El Sistema as "just another educational program," while others interpret the movement and its international cache as an opportunity to develop new audiences and reinvent the fundamental role of the professional orchestra. Repositioning what it means to be an orchestra, however, requires questioning long held cultural values and traditions that are deeply embedded in the way these organizations operate. The challenges that arise from these questions become especially acute when one considers the artistic and ideological dissonance between the fields of professionalized music performance and music education, a dissonance further exacerbated by the orchestra's elitist roots described in this dissertation's introduction. The present chapter does not intend to provide a comprehensive history of El Sistema, nor does it detail the movement's recent implementation in countries like Colombia, England, or Germany. Instead, it explores for the first time how American orchestras are exploiting the El Sistema model to overcome some of the challenges that they have endured for so long.

Juan Bautista Plaza, José Antonio Abreu, and the Birth of El Sistema

While the El Sistema movement itself is a relatively recent phenomenon, Venezuela boasts a long history of using music education and performance as a means of empowering youth on a national scale. Indeed, antecedents of El Sistema—both socio-political and musical—can be found in the work of composer Juan Bautista Plaza (1898-1965), who served as the driving force behind the institutionalization of westernized music education in twentieth-century Venezuela. As Marie Elizabeth Labonville points out in her biography of Plaza, systematized music education was unheard of in most of South America until the 1920s and 30s.⁶ Western art music, however, had long been available to Venezuelans, and was not restricted to the elite classes, although they were more likely to patronize concerts and other artistic productions in the country's capital of Caracas.

Imported across the Atlantic by Spanish colonizers after their arrival in 1522, European musical traditions quickly became a part of everyday life for many Venezuelans. Although the country achieved independence in 1821, Western art music continued to be one of the most prevalent traditions in practice, thanks in large part to the strong cultural presence of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, the music performed by military bands, traveling Italian opera troupes, and church musicians represented an authentic national pastime for generations of Venezuelans, and lingering perceptions of cultural colonialism were rarely voiced in public. Nevertheless, the cultivation and performance of classical music were obfuscated during the dictatorial reign of Juan Vicente Gomez (1908–35), who for the most part was uninterested in fostering artistic

⁶ Marie Elizabeth Labonville, *Juan Bautista Plaza and Musical Nationalism in Venezuela* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007).

culture of any sort.⁷ It was not until 1930, when Juan Bautista Plaza founded the Orquesta Sinfonica Venezuela, that the country's cultural production began to flourish on any sort of replicable scale.

Although Western-style orchestras had existed previously in Venezuela (Plaza had founded the Union Filharmonica eight years earlier), the Orquesta Sinfonica Venezuela was the first such ensemble to be founded and operated by non-Europeans. Although two-thirds of the orchestra consisted of European émigrés who had been trained overseas, and the repertoire performed was for the most part Germanic in origin, the organization's very existence was seen as a watershed moment in Venezuela's musical history.⁸ The orchestra owed much of its success to Plaza, who served not only as founder but part-time conductor, composer-in-residence, music critic, and ensemble cheerleader. Indeed, Plaza was an ardent supporter and believer in the power of music, and Western classical music in particular, to unite and empower a nation. Although he began his career as Kapellmeister of Caracas' largest cathedral after several years of study in Rome, Plaza soon became synonymous with an emergent Venezuelan nationalist movement and the role music education played in it. In a very real sense, Plaza's work served as an ideological prototype for El Sistema, cultivating the belief that classical music was not averse to mass appeal while working to bring great music to all categories of the social spectrum.⁹

Plaza's rise as the statesman of Venezuelan musical culture paralleled a pronounced nationalist movement in the late 1930s and '40s, during which time he and

⁷ Ibid., 13–45.

⁸ Ibid., 117.

⁹ Ibid., 118.

others began studying, disseminating, and lobbying on behalf of indigenous musical traditions. While this development might suggest a move away from the overtly European tradition that had dominated the official musical landscape for over a century, it instead gave rise to a new but familiar nationalist aesthetic couched in nineteenth-century Romanticism. For a generation of Venezuelan composers, the movement and the values it supported signaled musical legitimacy by transposing the Western to the local, reflecting the cultural consequence of colonial politics. For Plaza, it was part of a dynamic and well-defined strategy to elevate the country's musical reputation and impress European audiences and critics. He advanced three explanations as to why Latin American composers (and their music) were "inferior" to their European counterparts:

First, the newness of our nations which implies a national consciousness still poorly defined as far as artistic manifestations are concerned....
Second, the natural disorientation produced by the jumbled and heterogeneous mixture of the different ethnic elements that have come together on our continent.... And third, the underdeveloped and rudimentary nature of artistic education and music education in particular.¹⁰

Thus the sustained presence of Western art music and its culture might be understood as a homogenizing force that brought coherence to an otherwise disparate collection of musical influences and styles. While this explanation glosses over the imperialist stain associated with such rapid acceptance of an allegedly "superior" form of (implicitly Western) culture, it sheds light on the prevailing perceptions of art music in mid-century Venezuela.

Plaza's interest in the social powers of music education continued to mature throughout the 1940s, prompting several trips to the United States and Europe to observe

¹⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 141.

the most innovative strategies being employed by educators from around the world. A 1942 trip to New York included a special presentation at the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), as well as individual meetings with the music faculty at Eastman and Yale.¹¹ By 1944, Plaza had been appointed the Director of Culture in the Ministry of National Education, an official department of the Venezuelan government charged with the planning and implementation of curricula for literature, music, and dance. Although he resigned from the post in 1946, Plaza accomplished a great deal during his time in office, including the introduction of music appreciation courses into public schools and the formation of a competitive, government-funded Preparatory School of Music. Ten years later, he helped to establish an independent musical education program aimed at “increasing in young people the taste for music.”¹² Even in his old age, long after the rhetoric of Venezuela’s nationalist movement had waned, Plaza urged that “the culture of the country could gain more by having educators less prepared technically, but more sensitive and with more innate vocation to forge the souls of children.”¹³

The values voiced by Plaza—emotional security, spiritual fulfillment, and communal musicality—served as founding principles for José Antonio Abreu, who would incite the El Sistema movement several decades later. Although no sources link Abreu with Plaza, it seems likely that the former would have been aware of his predecessor’s reputation and legacy. Born in 1939, Abreu received a PhD in economics (1961) and degrees in composition and organ performance from the National Conservatory (1964), quickly rising to a position of prominence within the government

¹¹ Ibid., 230.

¹² This program was allegedly modeled after Marcel Cuvelier’s *Jeunesses Musicales*, a Belgian music education project.

¹³ Ibid., 244.

due to his expertise in socioeconomic development. After working as the country's Minister of Culture and the President of its National Council for Culture, Abreu set out to solve Venezuela's long-standing poverty issues by blending his expertise in music and social reform. The corrupt national oil industry had resulted in vast inequalities among the country's population, which in turn led to limited opportunity for social mobility. This stark division of power existed within the orchestra world, as well. In 1975, the capital city of Caracas housed two symphony orchestras that employed only European-trained musicians, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the young Venezuelan musicians trained at the city's conservatory to get steady work.

This reality was made all too clear to Abreu, a lifelong aficionado of classical music, when he allegedly witnessed a young bassoonist set fire to his instrument in protest.¹⁴ At once inspired and appalled, Abreu called together eleven local musicians and promised to finance a truly "Venezuelan" orchestra, provided that they each implement orchestral training programs in their respective neighborhoods. According to Stanford Thompson, an Abreu disciple and the leader of an El Sistema-inspired program in Philadelphia,

Oil companies came in, brought orchestral music, built concert halls, essentially constructing an upper-class activity [in Venezuela].... Abreu wouldn't have it, and said these orchestras aren't impacting their communities at all. His first mission was not social development; he wanted to make classical music relevant. But he realized that in order to make this happen, the money was in social reform. You put 350 people on the stage, and people will come and support you—not just to hear great music, but to celebrate the children and their accomplishments.¹⁵

To be sure, Abreu saw orchestral music as a tool for social mobility, empowering the poor through musical expression with the hope of building an "affluence of spirit" that

¹⁴ Related in an interview with Daniel Berkowitz, Manager of YOLA, 8 July 2011.

¹⁵ Interview with Stanford Thompson, Executive Director of Tune Up Philly, 14 March 2011.

had been absent for far too long.¹⁶ This sociological orientation to music education was likely influenced not only by Plaza's work in Venezuela but also several other precedents, including the mass choral programs cultivated by Getúlio Vargas and Heitor Villa-Lobos in 1930s Brazil. Abreu, however, emphasized socioeconomic development instead of elite European culture, using a decidedly utilitarian argument in efforts to build awareness around classical music and symphony orchestras in particular. Sponsored by the Venezuelan Ministry of Health and Social Development and announced via national headlines in early February 1976, El Sistema was designed first and foremost to positively impact at-risk children through immersion in orchestral performance.¹⁷ Music thus served a sociological and psychological function, offering children a new degree of status and recognition through communal performance. Abreu considered classical music to be an especially appropriate tool for this kind of social work, due in part to its inherent complexity, which requires a substantial time investment from both listener and performer.

El Sistema's preferred teaching methods embody a community-based approach and leverage an intensive curriculum.¹⁸ Beginning at age 4 or 5, children take part in basic musicianship courses that teach rhythm and solfège. Once students choose an instrument (a process that usually takes about three months), they begin orchestral training almost immediately. Indeed, taking part in group lessons and ensemble rehearsals from the earliest stages serves helps to build teamwork and a sense of cohesion through group ownership and responsibility. Orchestra membership is based largely on

¹⁶ Jennifer Chang, "Orchestrating an Affluence of Spirit" (Harvard University, 2007).

¹⁷ "To Play and To Fight: A Great Motto for a Great Orchestra," *El Nacional*, 2 February 1976.

¹⁸ There are many parallels between El Sistema and the Suzuki method, which was also founded in the mid-twentieth century with the intention of bringing formalized music education to a broader population.

the students' age, although several umbrella orchestras with more competitive standards have been instituted over time, including the Simon Bolivar and the Teresa Carreno Orchestras. En masse, El Sistema has helped to found thirty professional or semi-professional orchestras in Venezuela, cultivating an enviable culture of appreciation for classical music in general.¹⁹ Initially, the programming adopted by these orchestras was remarkably homogenous, focusing on nineteenth-century masterworks by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler. This apparent conservatism was born out of necessity, taking advantage of the limited musical resources available while allowing for crosspollination among the country's growing *núcleo* network.²⁰ Joint concerts became a regular feature of the program, and it was not unusual to have over two hundred children at different phases of their musical development on stage during a performance. Students learned to live, play, and work as a cohesive unit, blending social reformation tactics with music education in new and effective ways.

Today, Abreu's grand vision has developed into a \$25 million per-year program that includes over 180 núcleos, or neighborhood centers, throughout Venezuela. El Sistema's success—defined here via its positive impact on hundreds of thousands of children, its role in bringing Venezuelan orchestral culture to life, and its ability to capture the spirit of a nation—has also driven the creation of other social programs throughout Venezuela, including a number of agricultural and reading-based initiatives. In 2004, nearly \$4 billion of the country's oil profits were spent on these programs alone.²¹ Despite a tumultuous political environment, El Sistema has continued to grow and mature, thanks in large part to Abreu's steadfast leadership. For his efforts, he has

¹⁹ Jennifer Chang, "Orchestrating an Affluence of Spirit" (Harvard University, 2007).

²⁰ This line of logic was corroborated in an interview with Daniel Berkowitz.

²¹ Jennifer Chang, "Orchestrating an Affluence of Spirit" (Harvard University, 2007).

been awarded UNESCO's International Prize of Music (1993–1995) and the designation “Ambassador of Peace” (1998), the Right Livelihood Award (2001), and the 2009 TED Prize, which provided him with resources to help spread program's message around the world.

Definitions and Best Practices

Before explicating the development of various El Sistema initiatives in the U.S., it is important to understand how exactly the movement has been defined, designed, and implemented. According to Erik Holmgren, director of the Abreu Fellows program, “If you go around and ask what is El Sistema, you don't really get a lot of clear answers.... You get that it's a program for poor kids in Venezuela, which it is not.... The narrative has really yet to reveal itself.”²² The uniqueness of El Sistema has become an especially important rhetorical point as proponents of the movement attempt to distinguish it from other music education or social service initiatives. What makes a program truly “El Sistema-inspired”? Is such a designation signified simply by the intention of the program's founders, or are there agreed upon guidelines that specify the content and structure of each lesson plan?

While no consensus has been reached, it seems as though the program's exceptional characteristics come not from specific pedagogical tactics, but instead from some relatively abstract guiding principles. Words like “philosophy,” “ideology,” and “core beliefs” are used by El Sistema veterans to describe the program's essence, which is understood not as an imitable structure but instead as a starting point or set of best practices. Dan Trahey, Director of OrchKids and a vocal supporter of Abreu's

²² Interview with Erik Holmgren, Director of the Abreu Fellows Program, 28 June 2011.

philosophies, supports this assertion. For him, El Sistema “Is absolutely not a system, there’s no doubt about that. It’s definitely [more of] an inspiration center.”²³ The program might thus be understood as a bundle of tools or principles, fueled by a central budget, that can be used flexibly in their adaptation to a specific community context. Another Abreu disciple points out that

Even he [Abreu] refers to [El Sistema] as a “non-system.” Every núcleo is sort of an invention of the community. Each community finds ways and adaptations in their own community to achieve this common goal to start their own orchestra. There are of course similarities, but as we began implementing it here, we actually realized that it feels more like a philosophy than any specific pedagogy.²⁴

Early adopters of the El Sistema “philosophy” tend to emphasize between three and nine tenets, or core principles, that guide their work, including social change, access, intensity, connection, and ensemble.²⁵ Although several of these characteristics, such as access and intensity, may be self-evident in practice, others are not. The notion of “social change” refers here to the youth development portion of the program, which aims to build a sense of confidence and responsibility in young student musicians. “Connection” signifies the intention to build a network of mutually inspired teachers, families, and communities that will support and nourish the students enrolled in these programs. Finally, the term “ensemble” reflects the group-based learning model employed through El Sistema’s programs. For many, this is the key marker that distinguishes El Sistema from other, more traditional modes of music education. Daniel Berkowitz has experienced both types, first as a trombone student at Northwestern University and then as a participant in El Sistema USA’s Abreu Fellows program. Now manager of the Los Angeles

²³ Interview with Daniel Trahey, Director of OrchKids, 12 July 2011.

²⁴ Interview with Daniel Berkowitz.

²⁵ Ibid.

Philharmonic's YOLA initiative, Berkowitz recalls that, "When [I] grew up, you practiced as an individual, and worked really hard, and if you're lucky you get to play for an orchestra. In El Sistema, the orchestra is there from the beginning, and you're always striving as a collective to achieve success."²⁶

Because the program consciously shuns a systemic approach and elicits flexible interpretations, it is difficult to identify which initiatives are legitimate derivatives of the Venezuelan "model." Using the core principles outlined above as a point of departure, one can begin to construct a loose formula for Abreu's philosophy and its subsequent implementation. His philosophy, as articulated on the movement's official website, consists of: early exposure to classical music through individual and group instruction, totaling at least 20 hours per week; a loving but competitive ensemble environment that builds a student's sense of self-worth; a committed group of teachers, nearly all of whom are former students; a nested approach to community that emphasizes family, ensemble, and núcleo; and a commitment to great music making.²⁷ These beliefs are encapsulated in the program's motto, "Tocar y Luchar," or "to play and to fight," a maxim that is unpacked in a 2006 Spanish-language documentary by the same name.²⁸ The director of the film, Alberto Arvelo, studied at one of El Sistema's núcleos as a child, and thus his work reflects the program's relentless pursuit of excellence through collective experience and perseverance. To be sure, artistic excellence is a trope found throughout the El Sistema network, from the youngest beginner to the most advanced student. Those granted entry to higher-level ensembles, such as the Simón Bolívar Orchestra, receive

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For more on the underlying principles of the *El Sistema* model, see <http://fesnojiv.gob.ve/> and <http://elsistemausa.org/>.

²⁸ *Tocar y Luchar*, directed by Alberto Arvelo and distributed by Explorart Films, 2006.

government stipends that honor their accomplishments and place real economic value on their musical talent. Although El Sistema's curriculum is loosely organized and poorly documented, it has produced scores of talented students who have gone on to achieve international success.

The ideology espoused through El Sistema has positively impacted not only the individuals who take part in the program, but also Venezuela's classical music culture. By the middle of the twentieth century, most of the country's citizens perceived Western art music as fundamentally elitist, much as it is perceived today in the United States and Europe. Over time, however, El Sistema has challenged this assessment. Cultural leaders in Venezuela now declare that classical music has become "more popular than fútbol," and the level of artistry reached by the program's top ensembles is objectively comparable to some professional orchestras in America and Europe. Orchestral culture has become legitimately popular due in part to the social benefits associated with the program and, by proxy, with symphony orchestras and orchestral repertoire. Such a stark transformation in the way Venezuelan audiences engage with classical music suggests that a unique ideological shift has occurred. Mark Churchill, former Dean of Continuing Education at the New England Conservatory and founder of El Sistema USA, points out that "culture tends to be owned by the elite.... What's so fascinating is that in Venezuela, they are doing it the other way around. The culture is being introduced from the lower economic strata."²⁹ It should come as no surprise that many of the program's núcleos continue to be operated by alumni, creating a culture of continuity and personal investment that is lacking from most Western nations.

²⁹ Quoted in Heidi Waleson, "Southern Youthquake," in *Symphony Magazine* 59, No. 2 (March–April, 2008): 28–29.

Yet while El Sistema's history implies that it has operated as a subaltern movement that unites and empowers disenfranchised communities, one must remember that the initiative was in fact founded by a wealthy politician and is funded by official channels from within the national government. Although some have argued that El Sistema has "resisted politicization," it is impossible to separate the program's message of social reform through orchestral performance from various sociopolitical and cultural agendas.³⁰ The broader implications of using Western art music to unite young people has received considerable scholarly attention, and reveals long-standing power dynamics that shine a critical light on El Sistema's altruistic façade.³¹ Both in Venezuela and elsewhere, the program reflects the vision of a political and cultural elite. The ensuing tension between privileged individuals—or, as we will see later in this chapter, bureaucratic institutions—and the underserved majority is too often masked by the universalist rhetoric associated with nineteenth-century orchestral music.³² I do not mean to suggest that the administrators of El Sistema have explicitly forwarded this conception of orchestral culture or the class conflict it conceals. Instead, I raise these issues to highlight classical music's role in both building and bridging class divides. Such a critical interpretation shapes how El Sistema is used and viewed by orchestras and their audiences around the world.

³⁰ Jennifer Chang, "Orchestrating an Affluence of Spirit" (Harvard University, 2007).

³¹ See for example Bruno Nettl, "World Music in the Twentieth Century: A Survey of Research on Western Influence," *Acta Musicologica* 58, Fasc. 2 (Jul.–Dec., 1986): 361-73.

³² I refer here to the German conception of universalism, stemming from notions of the sublime and transcendence later imputed on the music of Beethoven, Brahms, and others. See for example Celia Applegate and Pamela Maxine Potter, eds., *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

El Sistema Comes to America

Despite these concerns, El Sistema's global success has captured the attention of prominent figures from across the musical spectrum. Supplementing the support voiced by Wynton Marsalis, Simon Rattle, Claudio Abbado, and others, CEO of the League of American Orchestras Jesse Rosen sees the movement as "a wake-up call to what is possible in orchestral performance at a professional level. As audience members ... you can't escape the power of 200 people on stage who are deeply engaged in music-making."³³ Perhaps this message resonates most strongly in the U.S., where the struggling orchestra industry and faltering public school music system have led to an especially receptive environment for widespread change. Those traditionalists that prefer more conservative modes of performance have yet to push back against El Sistema's entre into the orchestral world, perhaps due to its reputation as a youth development program. Many of the most prominent leaders in music education and orchestral administration view El Sistema as a means of introducing classical music to a broader community of listeners in new and substantive ways.

Ironically, the relationship between present-day American culture and classical music is not unlike the situation in Venezuela some thirty-five years ago, when orchestral performance was perceived as elitist by a majority of the population. One might argue, however, that the degree of poverty and crime in the United States is not nearly as ubiquitous or severe as it is in Venezuela, and thus the traction for such programs is not as great. There are also some fundamental differences concerning the underlying motivations for music education, especially in the context of the professional orchestra

³³ Quoted in Stephanie Stein Crease, "The Next Generation," in *Symphony Magazine* 59, No. 2 (March–April, 2008): 38.

industry. Here, the goal is to increase music literacy and develop future audiences; in Venezuela, classical music serves a means of achieving real social change.³⁴ How, then, does one create widespread interest in and appreciation for classical music if the same social needs and national support are not present?

To answer this question, José Antonio Abreu has worked with Mark Churchill and a host of others to bring El Sistema to America, with the implicit hope that the program will help address the limited social relevance of orchestras in contemporary American culture. In his 2009 TED keynote address, Abreu described the orchestra as “much more than an artistic structure; it is an example and school of life, because to play together means to intimately coexist toward perfection and excellence, following a strict discipline of organization and coordination.”³⁵ A performance of Shostakovich’s Tenth Symphony (second movement) and Arturo Márquez’s Danzón No. 2 followed Abreu’s talk, featuring Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Orchestra.³⁶ This brief performance provides some clues regarding El Sistema’s predictable programming practices, which usually pair large, energetic, and relatively familiar compositions with the occasional “nationalist” work, often written by a Latin American artist but composed in the lush musical style of nineteenth-century German Romanticism.³⁷

More remarkable than the predictability of the repertoire, however, is the visceral togetherness and coordination that distinguishes Venezuela’s orchestras from America’s

³⁴ Ibid., 47.

³⁵ See http://blog.ted.com/2009/02/_weve_transcrib.php for a transcript of the talk Abreu delivered at the 2009 TED (“Technology, Entertainment, and Design”) Conference, an annual event dedicated to pursuing and supporting “Ideas Worth Spreading” across various disciplines. For a videotape of the speech, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uintr2QX-TU>.

³⁶ For a video excerpt of this performance, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amSqQ5XNaGE>.

³⁷ Popular compositions in this nationalist vein include Inocente Carreno’s *Variaciones Sinfónicas*, along with and several works by Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera.

top ensembles. This phenomenon conflicts with modern performance practice, which arguably favors technical mastery and homogeneity over musicality, and has thus attracted the attention of several prominent music educators and administrators. Mark Churchill, for one, has become an ardent proponent of El Sistema's application in a variety of new contexts. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that Churchill's relationship with Abreu served as the basis of the program's recent surge in the United States. His story is one worth telling in full. In his own words,

I became aware of El Sistema in the 1990s through a documentary that was done in Boston called "Orchestra Dreams", by WGBH. It was a series, a Hispanic series or show, [and] they had done a wonderful half hour documentary. That was shown a lot in the Boston area, and then there was the first *60 Minutes* piece, which was really well done. I was putting together the Orchestra of the Americas, and we reached out to Dr. Abreu, and he became very active and vital to the project. The orchestra took its first trip to Venezuela in 2001, and through meeting Dr. Abreu and going down there, and seeing a concert with what is now the Simón Bolívar Orchestra, there was a lot of mutual recognition, bonding, and it led to the development of a very deep relationship. The [New England Conservatory] gave Dr. Abreu an honorary doctorate in 2000, at my urging, and we signed a friendship agreement with them in 2005.³⁸

Churchill was frustrated that El Sistema, which had received considerable recognition in Europe thanks to Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic, had not yet taken hold in the U.S. That changed in 2007, when the Simón Bolívar Orchestra presented concerts in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Boston with Gustavo Dudamel. Following their tour, Churchill helped to organize a series of symposia designed to introduce the program's philosophy to an audience of music educators and administrators. With Abreu in attendance, the conference sparked a national dialogue concerning what El Sistema might look like if it were adapted to an American context.

³⁸ Interview with Mark Churchill, founder of El Sistema USA, 26 May 2011.

Churchill continued to cultivate his relationship with Abreu at a major arts conference in late 2007, deciding then that it was time to organize and streamline what had been an otherwise diffuse developmental process. He recognized two pressing needs:

We needed to know more about what was going on, and we needed to be connected to people thinking about this and build some kind of solidarity, start a movement with the sense of energy and hope around it. There was also a need for leadership. It was those conversations that grew the idea of El Sistema USA, as a national center, and its first major initiative, the Abreu Fellows Program.³⁹

The fellows program was officially implemented as part of Abreu's 2009 TED wish, and quickly became the flagship initiative of El Sistema USA, a new professional organization devoted to social reform through orchestral performance and education. With Churchill serving as the primary catalyst, NEC president Tony Woodcock agreed to fund the program for five years following a visit to Venezuela with a group of board trustees, politicians, and administrators.

While the initiative's \$500,000 price tag is not covered by public subsidies, the national scope of the project, along with the curriculum's familiar emphasis on access, excellence, and community, mirrors Abreu's original vision for El Sistema. Starting in 2009, NEC began training ten postgraduate musicians each year with the intention of proliferating El Sistema-inspired organizations around the country. Each fellow is steeped in the ideology and methodology associated with the movement, learning practical skills such as fundraising, behavioral management, and organizational development alongside teacher training and immersion in the program's history and culture. After spending two months observing the music education centers in Venezuela

³⁹ Ibid.

and another ten months in Boston, fellows are encouraged to design their own curriculum and open núcelos in regions exhibiting need across the U.S. According to Erik Holmgren,

What we are doing with El Sistema in the United States is building a movement.... We have a violinist from the Cleveland Orchestra; we have fellows from Panama, Spain, Haiti, Venezuela. Fellows come to learn how to build these programs in the U.S. We take who they are as performers, then develop them into educators and turn them into non-profit leaders who can create the space for music to happen. They are fellows for a year, and then they are expected to work on behalf of the El Sistema movement in the U.S. for at least a year. But it is a lifetime commitment.⁴⁰

The initial success achieved by El Sistema USA and its offshoots is reflected by renewed national interest in music education and its role in building promising futures for both America's youth and the ailing orchestra industry.

With the first class of fellows having graduated in 2010, we can begin to assess the impact their efforts have had on the American musical landscape. To be sure, the diffusion of El Sistema's philosophy has resulted in a variety of organizational and artistic settings that are newly dedicated to Abreu's vision. While these programs include sites across North America and Europe, the remainder of this chapter focuses on El Sistema's application in the United States, so that we can more accurately compare cases and draw legitimate conclusions. Figure 4.1 lists forty-one programs throughout the U.S. that identify themselves as "El Sistema inspired."⁴¹ Programs in boldfaced type were started by Abreu Fellows, while those listed above the row of asterisks aligned themselves with Abreu's philosophy only after the founding of El Sistema USA in 2009. As this list suggests, there is no clear structure or form associated with these derivative programs. To reap the benefits of being an "officially" recognized El Sistema affiliate, a

⁴⁰ Interview with Erik Holmgren.

⁴¹ This list is constructed using El Sistema USA's website, and includes only those organizations that have self-reported themselves (accurate as of July 2011, see <http://elsistemausa.org/el-sistema/u-s-a/>).

Figure 4.1 El Sistema-Inspired Programs in the United States

Program	Program Type	City, State	Founded
Metropolitan Youth Orchestra Indianapolis	Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra	Indianapolis, IN	1995
Community MusicWorks	Independent	Providence, RI	1997
Seattle Music Partners	After School (Public)	Seattle, WA	2000
Harmony Program	After School	New York NY	2003
CityMusic Kids	After School	Cleveland, OH	2006
Music New Haven	After School	New Haven, CN	2006
MusiConnects	In and After School (Public)	Boston, MA	2007
Scrollworks	Youth Orchestra of Central Alabama	Birmingham, AL	2007
*****	*****	*****	*****
YOLA	Los Angeles Philharmonic	Los Angeles, CA	2007
OrchKids	Baltimore Symphony Orchestra	Baltimore, MD	2008
People's Music School YOURS Project	After School	Chicago, IL	2008
Youth Orchestras of San Antonio	After School	San Antonio, TX	2008
El Sistema USA	Support Organization	Boston, MA	2009
Soundscapes	Virginia Symphony Orchestra	Newport News, VA	2009
Verdugo Young Musicians Association	After School	Pasadena, CA	2009
Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles	Independent	Los Angeles, CA	2009
Latino Arts LA	After School (Public)	Los Angeles, CA	2009
First Notes	In and After School	Avon, CO	2009
Orchestrating Diversity	In and After School (Private)	St. Louis, MO	2009
UpBeat NYC	Independent	Brooklyn, NY	2009
Rhode Island Fiddle Project	Independent	Pawtucket, RI	2009
Boston Conservatory Lab Charter School	After School	Brighton, MA	2010
KidzNotes	After School (Public)	Durham, NC	2010

Tune Up Philly	After School (Parochial)	Philadelphia, PA	2010
Juneau, Alaska Music Matters	In-School (Public)	Juneau, AK	2010
Atlanta Music Project	Atlanta Symphony Orchestra	Atlanta, GA	2010
Corona Youth Music Project	Independent	Queens, NY	2010
Community Opus Project	San Diego Youth Symphony	San Diego, CA	2010
The Goff Family Foundation	After School	Fort Worth, TX	2010
Alta Vista Charter Schools	In School (charter)	Kansas City, MO	2010
Imagine Syracuse	After School (Private)	Syracuse, NY	2011
Harmony Grows	After School (Public)	Santa Rosa, CA	2011
Kalikolehua (El Sistema Hawaii)	After School	Honolulu, HI	2011
Kids In Concert	After School	Bainbridge Island, WA	2011
Harmony Stockton	Stockton Symphony	Stockton, CA	2011
Foundation to Assist Young Musicians (FAYM)	After School	Las Vegas, NV	2011
Planet Orchestra	South Bay Youth Orchestra	Lawndale, CA	2011
The Music Makers	After School	Denver, CO	2011
El Sistema at Carroll University	After School	Waukesha, WI	2011
Bravo Waterbury!	Waterbury Symphony Orchestra	Waterbury, CN	2011
El Sistema NYC at Northern Manhattan	Church/Community Center	New York, NY	2011

program need only acknowledge a philosophical affinity toward Abreu’s model. No core curriculum or certification is required. Indeed, each case is unique, suggesting that the adoption process is in reality one of *adaptation*, where administrators customize and reconfigure certain aspects of the program to fit the social, political, and musical resources of a specific environment.⁴² Katie Wyatt, former Abreu Fellow and executive director of KidzNotes in Durham, North Carolina, voiced this lack of uniformity in an article published by *Symphony Magazine*. In it, she wondered, “What are the rules? Is there a fixed model...? Should we be building a franchise? El Sistema-inspired organizations must be able to reflect the uniqueness of their communities, despite sharing a set of values and goals.”⁴³

Without the federal support available in Venezuela and Europe, U.S. cities have had to be flexible in their appropriation of the El Sistema philosophy.⁴⁴ Support from local governments is more likely to have a direct impact on the production and education of music than broader national initiatives, but the inconsistent and oftentimes ad hoc approach taken by individual communities makes it particularly difficult to compare programs and generalize findings. Indeed, there is a diverse array of operating models that address the unique challenges associated with each community or partner

⁴² For more on the diffusion and variation of practices across organizational environments, see Shahzad Ashari, Peer C. Foss, and Edward J. Zajac, “Made to Fit: How Practices Vary As They Diffuse,” *Academy of Management Review* 35, No. 1 (2010): 67–92.

⁴³ Kathryn Wyatt, with Rebecca Levi, “On the Road to El Sistema, Part I” *Symphony Magazine*, (Jan.–Feb. 2010): 78–83.

⁴⁴ The Canadian government has also supported the El Sistema movement, promising nearly \$2 million to the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra on 18 August 2010 so that the group could cultivate its own program (Jonathan Govia, “Canada: All Things Sistema,” *La Scena Musicale* (May 2011): 29).

organization.⁴⁵ To quote former El Sistema USA Managing Director Stephanie Scherpf, these models include:

The public school model, the charter school model, the university model, the service organization model, the symphony organization model—that diversity really fits the American landscape. There is no one-size-fits-all, there is no toolkit. It’s about finding a values-based and philosophical approach, and striving, adapting, never being fixed in order to suit the needs of students and communities. We’re just at the very beginning of the movement in the US, but it will be interesting to see what form those fundamental elements take.⁴⁶

Orchestras as a field have an especially complex relationship with El Sistema given the program’s potential to serve multiple organizational objectives, including education, audience development, and even public relations. Of the forty-one organizations listed in Figure 4.1, only ten are administered as subsidiaries of professional orchestras, but the two largest and most influential programs—YOLA and OrchKids—are managed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, respectively. Below, I introduce new findings about these two programs as well as Tune Up Philly, an initiative based out of West Philadelphia that has managed to succeed despite its strained association with the Philadelphia Orchestra. While these three programs exhibit different relationships with their parent institutions, they all provide rich ethnographic data that demonstrate some of the challenges orchestras face when attempting to appropriate El Sistema for their own purposes.

⁴⁵ According to Dan Trahey of OrchKids, “The biggest thing to realize was that we weren’t going to create something that looked like what was going on in Venezuela. Understanding that concept makes it a lot easier to adapt the thing. The first time I was down there I was like “Dang, this isn’t going to work in America.” It actually turns out that it works very well, it just looks different in different places. Even in Baltimore, my different núcleos look different from each other. Looking at different sites in Venezuela, they’re so different from each other. In Caracas, you have a super intense youth orchestra system, but you’re not going to have those in the Andes Mountains” (Interview with Daniel Trahey).

⁴⁶ Interview with Stephanie Scherpf, former Managing Director of El Sistema USA, 28 February 2011.

Youth Orchestra LA

Nearly two years before El Sistema USA's official launch, Deborah Borda and the Los Angeles Philharmonic unveiled Youth Orchestra LA, or YOLA, the first and most expansive El Sistema-inspired program in the country. The reasons such a project succeeded first in Los Angeles are not surprising, considering the appointment of Gustavo Dudamel as the orchestra's music director and the city's strong ties to Latino culture in general. Borda, who serves as CEO and president of the Philharmonic, was in the process of courting Dudamel when YOLA was first introduced in October 2007. Although his contract would not begin until the start of the 2009-10 season, Dudamel's rising reputation and presence at various YOLA functions quickly garnered attention from communities that the Philharmonic had not traditionally served.⁴⁷

Today, the Philharmonic boasts two distinct initiatives rooted in Abreu's philosophy, providing intensive music education services to more than 500 children across the city of Los Angeles. YOLA manager Dan Berkowitz described the genesis of these programs in a lengthy interview.⁴⁸ The first program, YOLA@EXPO, started at the end of 2007. Today, it services nearly 300 students, boasts two full orchestras, and operates seven days per week. The program is organized as a three-way partnership that is co-managed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Harmony Project (a preexisting music education initiative for underserved communities), and the EXPO Center—a public facility administered by the city. All costs incurred are split between the Philharmonic's education department and the Harmony Project, while the EXPO Center

⁴⁷ According to Dan Berkowitz, Dudamel "comes to the site several times each year, and he remembers the kids really well, and he always talks about YOLA and the program when he's traveling, it's always on his mind" (Interview with Daniel Berkowitz, 8 July 2011).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

provides facilities for lessons and rehearsals. Similarly, the Philharmonic's second program, YOLA@HOLA, is a partnership between the orchestra and Heart of Los Angeles, a privately-funded community center that provides services for students in the Rampart district. Launched in the Fall of 2010, this initiative provides fifteen hours of instruction each week for over one hundred students in the first and fourth grades.

According to Berkowitz,

The first grade students are on strings, the fourth graders on winds and brass, which is something we learned from Venezuela: if they have adult teeth, put them on winds and brass; if they don't, put them on strings. We also wanted to build in peer mentorship, so that three-year age gap was conducive. It's also great for siblings, where a family might be more committed to the program with two children enrolled.⁴⁹

Both YOLA@ EXPO and HOLA are managed by independent site directors with strong ties to the community, but they receive constant guidance and support from the Philharmonic's education department and senior administration. This collaborative model allows the programs to be "focused on the community.... It's not the LA Phil coming in trying to give something to the community, but instead it's being born out of the community, and thus is more digestible than it might otherwise be."⁵⁰

YOLA costs the Philharmonic less than one percent of its \$100 million annual budget, yet according to Berkowitz, "the value that it adds to the organization publicly, to the perception of what this organization does, is [huge], giving kids from these communities opportunities ... they wouldn't otherwise have.... It heightens the visibility of what we do without a huge financial burden." The program clearly holds public value for underserved communities, allowing the Philharmonic to raise awareness and funds

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

through sources that they would not otherwise have access to.⁵¹ The way in which the Philharmonic talks about this, however, suggests an inherent conflict between the organization's goals as a concert producer and an educational services provider.

Berkowitz discussed how the board of directors tackled this issue early on in YOLA's history:

A big scare that our board had at the beginning is how do you create this program and then take it away from a community if it fails? You can't, so when you create something like this you need to make sure that it is going to happen forever. So the initial plan was to invest heavily in the first five years of the program and then scale back, and let the community take over. At some point ... the board shifted direction and said this is something we need to support and have as core of part of what we do. If we were to back out, it wouldn't feel right.... There's no endowment for this, but we've invested in the program through funding from the operating budget and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.⁵²

Unlike traditional subscription concerts, this type of work is one-hundred-percent nonprofit in nature. The orchestra provides subsidized educational services with no immediate expectation of return, a fact made all the more remarkable by the program's high per-student cost.⁵³

Although there may not be any explicit expectations of a "return on investment" voiced by Philharmonic administrators—a circumstance that is reinforced by the lofty status attributed to educational work in general—there are ways in which the orchestra benefits from this work, as well. The publicity produced by YOLA undoubtedly strengthens the Philharmonic's reputation, but one could also argue that the orchestra

⁵¹ For more on YOLA's public value, see Mina Yang, "El Sistema, L.A.-Style: Music Education and Social Activism in the Twenty-first Century," Conference paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, 2010.

⁵² Interview with Daniel Berkowitz.

⁵³ Unlike more traditional educational programming, which often involves outreach concerts that reach thousands of students each year, YOLA provides intensely focused instruction for 500 students. This "less is more" approach allows teachers to work closely with students and adapt their teaching methods to meet individual student needs.

hopes the program will help to develop a new audience for classical music in Los Angeles and, more broadly, across the U.S. Whether or not YOLA is, to quote Gustavo Dudamel, “sustaining classical music” is up for debate, but it seems likely that the Philharmonic’s administration thinks of YOLA in strategic terms, using the program and the good will it generates as a tool to forward its primary objective: to produce and present high art for a paying audience. This is not to say that the social work achieved through YOLA is undesired, but the program’s structure clearly demarcates the boundaries between performance and education. While a small group of Philharmonic musicians take part in various aspects of YOLA, most do not. The teaching artists employed through the program are usually local freelancers who have a passion and training for educational work, not full-time orchestra musicians. So while the Philharmonic lends its administrative heft and artistic reputation to the program, it remains otherwise absent—a paradox discussed later in this chapter.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the success achieved through YOLA—both socially and educationally— is impressive. The program’s impact extends well beyond Los Angeles, as the organization has become an epicenter of the El Sistema movement, particularly in southern California. The Philharmonic has proactively cultivated a growing network of stakeholders that it regularly convenes, including the city and county of Los Angeles, universities, school districts, community music schools, nonprofit music organizations, music educators, community centers, and funders. Moreover, in October of 2011 the Philharmonic announced a new partnership with Bard College and Longy School of

⁵⁴ According to Erik Holmgren, director of the Abreu Fellows Program, YOLA “is not really run by the LA Philharmonic directly, there isn’t a lot of connection between the orchestra and the program on the ground. [But when Dudamel] walks in the room, there are cameras and there is lots of press (interview with Erik Holmgren, 28 June 2011).

Music called “Take a Stand,” which will serve as a counterpoint to El Sistema USA and offer master’s degrees in El Sistema teaching methods.⁵⁵ From Berkowitz’s perspective, the Philharmonic is “catalyzing a movement, so that this can happen all over the country and for it to become sustainable.... If it doesn’t work in LA, it’s not going to work anywhere, simply because of the support and resources we have behind it.”⁵⁶ In 2008, the orchestra leveraged these resources to contract the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at UCLA (CRESST) to collect and analyze data measuring YOLA’s impact, and advise the development of future outcomes and objectives for the program.⁵⁷ Although the study’s findings are uniformly positive, the underlying narrative suggests a tale of two aspirations: better student achievement, both at home and in the classroom, and higher organizational performance for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and its partners.⁵⁸ Whether or not these two goals are at odds with one another is a question to which I will return in this chapter’s conclusion.

OrchKids and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Aside from YOLA, OrchKids is the most well established El Sistema-inspired program in the United States. Loosely structured as an arm of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra’s (BSO) education department, the program is in fact the result of an unexpected collaboration between conductor Marin Alsop and Daniel Trahey, who now serves as the program’s executive director. OrchKids mission makes clear the dichotomy

⁵⁵ It is not yet clear whether Take a Stand will complement or compete with El Sistema USA, although Deborah Borda sees it as “different from El Sistema USA” (see Daniel J. Wakin, “Los Angeles Orchestra to Lead Youth Effort,” *The New York Times* 5 October 2011: C1).

⁵⁶ Interview with Daniel Berkowitz.

⁵⁷ Yael Silk, Noelle C. Griffin, Kirby Chow, *Youth Orchestra LA: Theory of Action and Proposed Evaluation Plan*, CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles, December 2008

⁵⁸ These dichotomous objectives are implied in the structure of the report and its research questions. By organizational performance, I mean here level of community support, concert attendance, etc. (Ibid.).

between orchestra and community suggested above, articulating it through the following three objectives:

- 1) Use music as a vehicle to provide Baltimore City children with mentoring, encouragement and vision for a promising future.
- 2) Create an after-school program devoted to music appreciation, academics, citizenship, community awareness, family and health (emotional, social and physical).
- 3) Continue to develop the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as an accessible community resource.⁵⁹

In the summer of 2011, I traveled to Baltimore to visit with Trahey and his staff.⁶⁰ The opportunity to observe and speak with the teachers, administrators, and students involved in the program made the distinction between OrchKids and the BSO's traditional concert offerings all the more palpable. Below, I offer a brief history and description of OrchKids in action, followed by a critique of the program's relationship to the BSO through the insights of Trahey himself.

Founded with a \$100,000 gift from Alsop, OrchKids began operating out of Harriet Tubman Elementary School in 2008 with a cohort of thirty students.⁶¹ Trahey, who had previously worked for the Hartford Symphony in Connecticut, contacted Alsop after traveling to Venezuela and visiting with José Antonio Abreu, who inspired him to transpose the philosophy of El Sistema and build a program of his own. Since then, OrchKids has become one of the country's premiere music education initiatives. When setting out to recruit new students, Trahey took a "propagandistic approach," continually communicating the unique benefits associated with his program to anyone that would

⁵⁹ As stated on the program's website, <http://www.bsomusic.org/main.taf?p=10>.

⁶⁰ During my visit, I attended a special workshop offered by Trahey for other El Sistema administrators across the country, titled "Community Engagement Through Music Education Summer Institute" (13 July 2011).

⁶¹ As music director of the BSO and a recent MacArthur Foundation "Genius" grant recipient, Alsop personally gifted \$100,000 to the orchestra so that Trahey could start OrchKids.

listen—especially parents, teachers, and school administrators. Akin to the tenets espoused by other El Sistema-inspired programs, OrchKids strives to help students “overcome material poverty through spiritual affluence,” using intense, daily musical instruction to strengthen students’ sense of self-worth, academic performance, and their relationship with family and community. Artistic excellence is important, and Trahey places a premium on hiring the best teachers he can find, but the program is not designed to produce the next Gustavo Dudamel with any sort of predictability. Instead, Trahey sees OrchKids as a tool to help students learn discipline, graduate high school, and become productive members of society.⁶² His is an ethical model, rooted in an attempt to heal a child’s soul through ensemble performance.

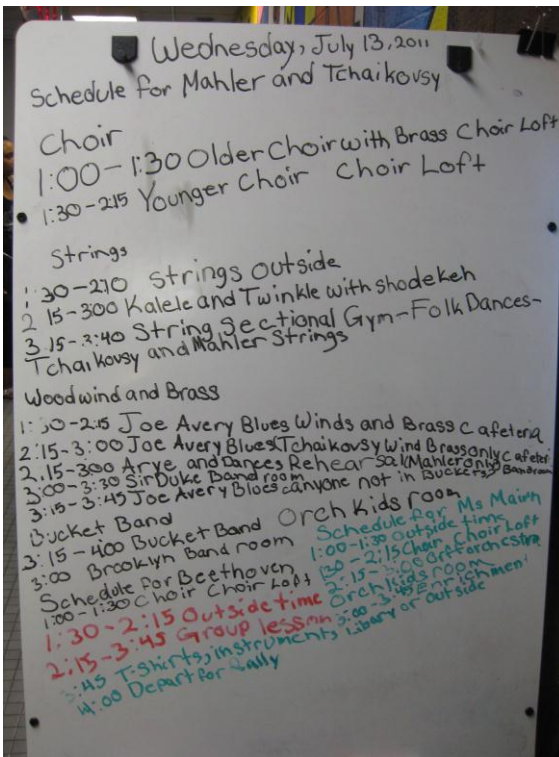
Today, OrchKids works with over 240 students across three underserved schools. In 2010-11, Lockerman Bundy Elementary School acted as the primary OrchKids’ site (Harriet Tubman had closed several years before). Located deep in West Baltimore, Lockerman Bundy had a long history of student absenteeism, misconduct, and underperformance, but according to parents and teachers, the program has “completely transformed” the school. Much of the credit goes to site director Nick Skinner and his stable of teaching artists, who constitute a near-constant presence in the school’s hallways and classrooms. Children start the program in pre-k or kindergarten, and then have a choice to continue when they move on to first grade. To date, over 85% of students have opted to remain in the program, helping to augment the monotony of primary and secondary education with collaborative artistic expression. Lockerman Bundy has gone so far as to afford music-related activities the same import as primary

⁶² As described in Mary Carole MacCauley, “A Big Stage for a Small Orchestra,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 31 March 2011.

Figure 4.2 Mural painted by OrchKids students at Lockerman Bundy Elementary School



Figure 4.3 OrchKids' schedule at Lockerman Bundy Elementary School



subject material, such as math and science. Program highlights include full orchestra rehearsals (which here refer to any ensemble, “exploding the definition of what an orchestra can be”), frequent “rallies” or concerts, and the cacophonous bucket band—a student favorite that provides an outlet for excess energy or aggression through rhythmic ensemble drumming. All of this work has led to discernible gains in student achievement, but according to Alsop, it also represents “a musically valid extension of what the BSO does,” extending the orchestra’s reach into every segment of the Baltimore community.⁶³

Students involved in the program have the opportunity to play on mainstage subscription concerts for ticket buyers, playing a fundamental role in rethinking the relationship between orchestras and their (traditional) audiences. According to Trahey,

I think the impact we’ve had on the community has been telling, and I think people are very frustrated with these ideas of these one-offs concerts. I mean jeez, everyone in Baltimore sees the orchestra perform, that’s almost doing the kids a disservice, since they’ll never have a chance to play in anything close to that. What we’re doing is infiltrating these kids’ lives with music....⁶⁴

Despite OrchKids’ resounding successes, however, the program continues to face numerous challenges, particularly with regard to prevailing orchestral culture. Trahey recognizes that the students and parents they work with have had limited exposure to classical music, a reality that is exacerbated by a perceived sense of superiority and entitlement among traditional audiences. For this reason, he trains his teachers to be “cheerleaders, not only pedagogues and artists.” Recruiting the right teaching artists presents a considerable challenge, as traditional conservatory education methods do not adequately emphasize the skill set needed for this type of work. Fortunately, former

⁶³ Quoting Marin Alsop in *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Interview with Daniel Trahey, director of OrchKids, 12 July 2011.

students often return to teach in and administer these programs, satisfying a cyclical process that provides continuity and cultivates community.

Like YOLA and the LA Philharmonic, Trahey sees OrchKids as an inspiration—not a model—for other organizations interested in implementing El Sistema-inspired programming. Indeed, the only reason OrchKids continues to operate under the auspices of the BSO is Alsop’s personal commitment to the program and its message.⁶⁵ Without that commitment and the cache attached to the city’s largest arts nonprofit, it would be “very difficult to navigate the bureaucracy of the orchestra,” not to mention the snobbism associated with symphonic culture.⁶⁶ Without significant institutional support or musician participation (only one member of the BSO is involved in the program), OrchKids exists as an almost completely separate entity. Trahey reports directly to Alsop and manages his own staff of teachers and site directors, and as the program matures, its diffuse structure has slowly evolved into one that could be funded and operated without the aid of a major orchestra.⁶⁷ I argue that such organizational divisions reflect the ideological, political, and cultural gaps separating the symphony orchestra (in its current conception) and El Sistema. This point is articulated succinctly by Tony Woodcock, president of NEC and an early adapter of Abreu’s philosophy: “[OrchKids] is not part of the central engine of the orchestra. For me, it’s not serious.”⁶⁸ Whether or not the program is serious, the BSO’s failure to integrate OrchKids into its day-to-day operations highlights a lack of fit

⁶⁵ According to Trahey, housing OrchKids as a subsidiary of the BSO “was ideal because I had the support of the musical leader of the city. Marin was hired here because of that. I would almost say that she was hired first because of her musical ambassadorship. That aligned very well with what I was thinking. But if I was doing this in another city, I might not go to the orchestra, I might go to a Christian services organization, or a university” (Interview with Daniel Trahey).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ During an informal conversation with Nick Skinner, he discussed the possibility of reorganizing as a separate 501(c)3 in the near future, pointing to possible partners that would be able to offer independent funding and site access.

⁶⁸ Interview with Tony Woodcock, President of the New England Conservatory, 17 June 2011.

that has motivated other El Sistema-inspired programs to look outside the orchestra world when courting potential organizational partners.

Tune Up Philly

Although both YOLA and OrchKids are designed at least partially as in-house education programs for professional orchestras, other organizational possibilities exist. One of the most established alternatives is Tune Up Philly, an initiative started in 2009 by Curtis Institute of Music graduate Stanford Thompson.⁶⁹ A member of the Abreu Fellows' inaugural class, Thompson oversees a \$300,000 grassroots initiative that provides year-round instruction to approximately eighty students at St. Francis de Sales parochial school in West Philadelphia. Located approximately one mile from the University of Pennsylvania's campus, the site has become a local anomaly thanks to its intense dedication to music education.

While Tune Up Philly is now grouped among the country's premiere El Sistema offshoots, it took time to build the momentum and trust needed to succeed in one of Philadelphia's most precarious communities. According to Thompson,

We talked to the public schools, realizing that the structure was already there. The facilities, network, resources, infrastructure were all there, but they weren't being utilized. There was too much red tape, and there were no really effective partnerships or collaborations going on.... Charter schools were much more receptive, but we got shut down by a new principal, who told me that [the] student's couldn't do math, or read or write. Music was the last thing on her mind.⁷⁰

Despite these and other setbacks, Thompson has expertly navigated a bureaucracy of city leaders to cultivate what no one else has been able to: a music education initiative that is

⁶⁹ According to an online report distributed through El Sistema USA on 20 September 2011, "Tune Up Philly" has officially changed its name to "Play On, Philly."

⁷⁰ Interview with Stanford Thompson, director of Tune Up Philly, 14 March 2011.

palatable and even attractive to students, parents, and administrators in Philadelphia's cash-strapped school system. The result, a self-sustaining program that garners enough funding to practically eliminate participation fees and boasts a wait list of over 300 students, has attracted widespread attention in the popular media.⁷¹ Peter Dobrin of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has been an outspoken advocate for the program from the very beginning, predicting that "if Tune Up Philly follows the trajectory of its impressive first three months, it won't be long before Philadelphia achieves Thompson's wonderfully economical articulation of the program's grand vision: "Orchestras everywhere."⁷²

I visited St. Frances de Sales in the summer of 2011, when Thompson was busy piloting a summer version of the program. During the academic year, children meet fifteen hours each week, creating a culture of continuity and intensity that distinguishes the program from other initiatives. The schedule is freer in the summer, but no less intense. Enrolled students congregate for a general "creativity class" at 8:30 each morning, where they learn what it means to "be a musician" and perform music as members of an ensemble. The teacher I observed led the class by improvising on his instrument, sliding between orchestral excerpts and jazz standards while discussing the commonalities between music making and imagination.⁷³ The basics of music theory and instrumental technique are taught alongside more philosophical and psychological topics, such as the role of music in building social relationships. This creativity class is followed

⁷¹ According to Thompson, students pay a \$100, waivable participation fee each year, and the program's twelve teaching artists make a respectable wage of \$50/hour (Conversation with Stanford Thompson, 7 July 2011).

⁷² Peter Dobrin, "Building on hope, not only for city's children, but also for all orchestras," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 January 2011.

⁷³ Paul, the leader of the class I observed, is a professional clarinet player and one of Thompson's most treasured teaching artists. When describing what he does professionally, he enthusiastically replies that he "PLAYS for a living," a response that elicits considerable excitement from the students (Observations from classroom visit, Tune Up Philly, 7 July 2011).

Figure 4.4 Students Rehearsing at St. Francis de Sales Parochial School in Philadelphia (7 July 2011)



by group lessons (organized by instrument) and sectional rehearsals. Each day ends with a full orchestra rehearsal, which tends to be short and additive, lasting only thirty or forty-five minutes to account for younger students' limited attention span. Yet the interactions during rehearsals are purposeful, transcending the strictly musical to instill confidence, curiosity, and respect in each young musician. What's more, Thompson has worked closely with school officials to monitor trends in student behavior, attendance, and achievement, drawing positive comparisons to those not enrolled in the program.

Supporters wish to see Tune Up Philly implemented across the city, providing “an utterly democratic, broad-based music education ... that keeps at-risk youth out of

trouble—a social program disguised as music lessons.”⁷⁴ As the title of Dobrin’s article suggests, however, the program provides hope for more than just the students involved. Indeed, when one considers that the majority of the city’s population has no substantive connection to the symphonic repertoire, professional ensembles such as the Philadelphia Orchestra stand to benefit from the work being done by Tune Up Philly. In Thompson’s words, “American orchestras export their art to outside their communities, but if you can prove that the music is uplifting the community, then you get funding from gang and violence prevention agencies, from everyone who is involved in education and youth development.”⁷⁵ This linkage could be especially valuable in Philadelphia, where the orchestra’s education department is woefully understaffed and community need is at an all-time high.⁷⁶ Yet from the very beginning, Tune Up Philly has navigated a strained relationship with the city’s flagship arts organization. Although Thompson had originally intended Tune Up Philly to be a training arm of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra (PYO), certain officials viewed it instead as a cash cow that could accumulate considerable administrative fees, reflecting divergent priorities that have forced Thompson to reconsider his role with the organization.⁷⁷ At the Philadelphia Orchestra, senior managers expressed little interest at the possibility of partnering, despite Thompson’s attempts to approach the group’s board of directors and discuss mutual fundraising opportunities. Ironically, it was a Philadelphia Orchestra board member who helped

⁷⁴ Dobrin, “Building on Hope, not only for city’s children, but also for all orchestras.”

⁷⁵ Interview with Stanford Thompson, 14 March 2011.

⁷⁶ As of 2011, the Philadelphia Orchestra’s education department consisted of only three employees due to budget cuts.

⁷⁷ On 20 September 2011, Thompson announced his departure from Tune Up Philly and the formation of an independent initiative, “Play On, Philly!” In an email message, Thompson explained that the new program will continue to service St. Francis de Sales students and employ the same teaching artists, but will not be beholden to the agenda of a sponsoring organization. The Philadelphia Youth Orchestra will continue to operate Tune Up Philly, which will be based out of a new site in North Philadelphia (Email correspondence with author, 21 September 2011).

launch Thompson's program with a \$500,000 pledge, prompting him to wonder what the orchestra's administrators were thinking:

It's an embarrassment to the Philadelphia Orchestra that we're able to tap into the minority community, and that we have a more successful music education program. [Now] they're calling to talk about partnering, but at the beginning, they wouldn't let me talk to their board members about fundraising.... Tune Up Philly could have been sponsored by the Philadelphia Orchestra, but it's not.⁷⁸

Despite the seemingly symbiotic partnerships cultivated by YOLA and OrchKids, Thompson prefers to operate outside the boundaries of a major professional orchestra. In his view, Tune Up Philly has little to gain from such an association, particularly if one assumes that the orchestra's musicians would not participate in the program without additional compensation.

In fact, the hiring model employed by Tune Up Philly—working with lower profile musicians who are known locally for their inspired teaching methods—follows a trend that is at odds with the values embedded in traditional conservatory training. And despite the absence of “star” musicians, programs like Tune Up Philly attract development opportunities that arguably exceed those of a major orchestra. This is particularly true if one can provide measurable evidence linking participation in orchestral performance and improvements in academic and social behavior. Thompson concedes that it would take \$20,000–\$30,000 to sponsor a student for the entirety of his or her childhood, but while this cost exceeds the cost of traditional music education, its potential consequences make for a worthwhile investment. For instance, in Pennsylvania, it costs \$35,000 annually to house one prison inmate, and if researchers can prove that participation in programs like Tune Up Philly help to decrease an individual's proclivity

⁷⁸ Ibid.

toward criminal activity, El Sistema's stock will continue to rise. While such causal relationships have not been proven, Thompson continues to extoll the benefits of José Antonio Abreu's vision. In the coming year, he hopes to transplant his program to other local schools and form a chamber orchestra of teaching artists that would perform free concerts in the communities they serve, thereby strengthening relationships with students' families while increasing the program's visibility and artistic legitimacy.

Reconciling Symphonic Culture with El Sistema

Considering the three programs introduced above and the more than forty other núcleos across the country, one could say that the El Sistema movement has successfully penetrated the American soundscape. Its contagious philosophy, intuitive simplicity, and impressive results, both artistic and social, defy contestation. El Sistema's ascension to "buzzword" status is confirmed by the unprecedented attention it has received from influential orchestra commentators and professional organizations.⁷⁹ Yet a dissonance between Abreu's philosophy and the prevailing practices of American orchestras bubbles beneath the surface, calling into question the industry's motivations while threatening to subvert the important work accomplished through these programs. Indeed, traditional conceptions of artistic excellence and a history of elitism in orchestras conflict with the program's populist message. The nature of this conflict warrants further consideration.

To determine whether these El Sistema programs meet the assumptions and expectations intrinsic to the American orchestra music education systems, let us first consider the differences between them. As has already been discussed, El Sistema's

⁷⁹ El Sistema and its recent adoption in the U.S. have been a leading topic of conversation in industry publications and at conferences since at least 2007 (see especially *Symphony Magazine*, the bimonthly publication of the League of American Orchestras).

philosophy is rooted in considerable commitment by both student and teacher. The fifteen or more hours spent each week on lessons and rehearsals dwarf the three to four hours dedicated to music education in most American public schools.⁸⁰ Tony Woodcock sees more substantive differences between systems as well:

What I experienced [in Venezuela] was music making in a very different way than in the so-called developed world, both in terms of energy and resources. What I witnessed in rehearsal was preparation and teaching at a very high and uniform level, not necessarily training orchestral musicians of the highest caliber, which I do not mean in a derogatory way whatsoever, but producing a technical competence informed by passion for the music. In the so-called developed world, we've done it the other way around. We look at technical competence, and if you have to bring in musical passion at the end of the day, all well and good, but people are not necessarily judged on that.

Their philosophy is very different, and as a result of that their music making is at a different level than what we hear from American orchestras these days. If I were to characterize American orchestras now, compared to recordings of the past, is a homogeneity in style of performance today, where it's very difficult, at least to my ears, to distinguish orchestras from one another. I think if we're just looking at performance, I would say we're in a place now that focuses on an adherence to refinement, and so when you here what's happening in Venezuela, it's as if you've been hit by the blast of an open furnace.⁸¹

To be sure, moving away from an “adherence to refinement” represents a fundamental shift in the way performers and audiences interact with the musical experience. Erik Holmgren notes that, “when you go to Venezuela, people are crying as they watch the [orchestras] rehearse,” suggesting a heightened degree of emotional engagement that contrasts the utilitarian goals of music education in America.⁸² Here, the primary objective is to attain musical literacy, or, in the case of orchestras, “to develop a love of

⁸⁰ This figure may even be exaggerated, considering that many public schools no longer offer music programs due to budget constraints and testing requirements.

⁸¹ Interview with Tony Woodcock, 17 June 2011.

⁸² Interview with Erik Holmgren, 28 June 2011.

symphonic music and build future audiences.”⁸³ In Venezuela, the goal is social change. Despite its intense emphasis on artistic quality and a steadfast interest in cultivating appreciation for classical music, El Sistema is, to quote Churchill, “a social change program that uses music, rather than a music program using social change.”⁸⁴

To reconcile these differences, some of the leading voices from the El Sistema movement have pushed for a more flexible integration of new techniques and programs into the current educational landscape. Stephanie Scherpf, formerly of El Sistema USA points out that “we can’t ignore all of the great work that has been done in music education up to this point. [We] really have to be part of this larger ecosystem... This is not about reinventing the wheel, [it] is about best practices and good teaching.”⁸⁵

Although administrators and teachers are working hard to design new programs that are complementary rather than competitive, there are still other differences that make assimilation more difficult, including disparate conceptions of musical excellence.

Educator and author Tricia Tunstall believes that,

To be successful with an El Sistema initiative, we in the U.S. would have to challenge some really deep and long-held assumptions associated with music and music education. First regarding the absolute priority of musical excellence above all else, and second regarding the reality that we pursue music as an individual endeavor. Orchestras are a collection of individuals, who have each pursued their education individually, until finally after graduating from conservatory and achieving the highest level of success on an individual level, then people get collected into orchestras. Somehow that’s the model here, and that’s supposed to make up musical excellence. That idea is so deep, it has to be challenged.⁸⁶

⁸³ Quoting League of American Orchestras Vice President Polly Kahn in Stephanie Stein Crease, “The Next Generation,” in *Symphony Magazine* 59, No. 2 (March–April, 2008): 47.

⁸⁴ Quoting Mark Churchill in Brian Wise, “El Sistema Branches Out,” *WQXR*, 20 March 2011 (<http://www.wqxr.org/articles/wqxr-features/2011/mar/20/el-sistema-branches-out-takes-root-flatbush/>).

⁸⁵ Interview with Stephanie Scherpf, 28 February 2011.

⁸⁶ Interview with Tricia Tunstall, 15 June 2011.

Similar challenges confronted José Antonio Abreu during his crusade to create a new cultural appreciation for western classical music in Venezuela. But the practices he sought to change were not as deeply entrenched as they are in the U.S.⁸⁷ Part of the challenge in translating Abreu's philosophy to an American context is the inherent value system embedded in classical music culture. In Venezuela, Abreu developed a system that "gives music and opportunity to every child.... It doesn't measure success in ticket sales, it measures success in children. Our task ... is to reimagine over 100 years of musical culture with a new sense of possibility."⁸⁸ This underlying ideological conflict is exacerbated by the heterogeneity of our organizational populations, which defy one-size-fits-all solutions and rarely yield consensus.

The division between these two archetypes extends from the ideological to the aesthetic, encompassing not only cultural concerns but also repertoire, which plays a critical role in the successful translation of a program to new environmental contexts. The political and cultural agenda ascribed to the orchestral canon highlights a conflict between universalist and elitist ideologies, but Mina Yang and others have argued that such repertoire can serve as an effective community building tool.⁸⁹ This phenomenon has been exploited especially well in Venezuela, but in the U.S., programming strategies are less ubiquitous. For example, in Los Angeles ensembles mix the traditional with the relevant, as teachers introduce arrangements of Michael Jackson's "Beat It" alongside Beethoven and Brahms so that students are exposed to a more diverse (albeit somewhat

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Interview with Erik Holmgren.

⁸⁹ See Mina Yang, "El Sistema, L.A.-Style: Music Education and Social Activism in the Twenty-first Century," conference paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, 11 November 2010.

artificial) assortment of musical traditions.⁹⁰ Several observers have suggested, however, that the importance of repertoire is superseded simply by the ensemble environment. In Tunstall's experience,

The ensemble piece is obviously the lynchpin. The advantage of western symphonic music is that it presents a complexity, an artistic complexity, and a level of ensemble beauty that is fairly unmatched in the repertoires of the world..... So that is a standard to work towards, an amazing mechanism for achieving musical excellence in an ensemble, because you're working toward such a high standard, and in an arena of such complexity....⁹¹

To be sure, the high standards and collective virtuosity of Venezuela's ensembles are why El Sistema has grown into a global brand. Yet while the media has focused on the program's top ensembles like the Simón Bolívar Orchestra, many of the 300,000 students do not exhibit substantial musical talent, and most do not pursue a career in music. In the U.S, however, orchestras continue to view the program as an opportunity "to train elite musicians" and "develop [the] great performing groups of the future."⁹² El Sistema's proto-populist characteristics present a threat to traditional conservatory training, which emphasizes solo musical performance and thus validates exclusivity.

In Baltimore, Dan Trahey employs only one orchestra musician on his growing staff of teaching artists. For him, "what the [BSO] brings to the table is the highest possible artistry that you can find.... I don't want these players teach for me unless they want to and are skilled. What I do want is them to inspire these kids through their

⁹⁰ Interview with Daniel Berkowitz.

⁹¹ Interview with Tricia Tunstall. This view is confirmed by Stephanie Scherpf, who also sees deviations from traditional programming practices in contemporary Venezuela: "Now in Venezuela, they have a big band, a huge folk music element, choirs are huge. I think a lot of it is the classical canon, but they engage Latin American composers. There's room and flexibility to adapt those things, but it's really about playing in an ensemble and maybe not about the repertoire. Ultimately you have to do what works in the community" (Interview with Stephanie Scherpf).

⁹² Interview with Erik Holmgren.

artistry.”⁹³ This division between performers and teachers is reflected in the narrow focus of most postsecondary music education programs. NEC’s Tony Woodcock expressed dismay upon learning that OrchKids and YOLA rarely employ their own musicians: “You’ve got this huge resource pool of an orchestra, paid exceptionally well ... but instead of using that huge, wonderful, magical resource, they bring in teaching artists, which for me is simply obfuscating the resources that you’ve already got.”⁹⁴ This exclusion stems as much from the musicians themselves as it does from managers interested in hiring trained teaching artists, however. Due to the limited professional engagements allowed under most collective bargaining agreements, many unionized orchestra members cannot accept additional work, even when it is categorized as “community engagement.” For example, in San Antonio, director of youth orchestras Steve Payne attempted to engage San Antonio Symphony musicians in an El Sistema-inspired partnership, but negotiations quickly broke down when the players refused to take on additional non-performing responsibilities.

Tunstall believes that this division stems from the predominance of a decidedly performer-centric definition of musical excellence:

The question of musical excellence versus social action as opposing goals seems to surface very soon [here].... In Venezuela, they just don’t see those things as opposing goals. They have an absolutely passionate and I think self-reinforcing idea that musical excellence and social action can be intimately connected.... They are insistent on not considering those goals as mutually exclusive. You can even put social action first, and if you do it the right way musical excellence will occur. That’s very difficult for any musician trained in the United States to even imagine.⁹⁵

⁹³ Interview with Daniel Trahey.

⁹⁴ Interview with Tony Woodcock.

⁹⁵ Interview with Tricia Tunstall.

Dan Berkowitz and YOLA have had some success engaging musicians from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, but he understands why most prefer not to be involved with the program. In his words,

The musicians that have [participated] have been incredibly inspired. Most of them grew up with conservatory training, and they come into this saying “wait a minute, I’m not happy with this.” When they come to meet these students, it brings a useful presence back to their lives, a new energy that reminds them why they played music in the first place. [But] many of them are uncomfortable teaching such young kids. I think maybe when they’re at a higher level, players might want to do something in a masterclass type setting, do something they’re more comfortable with....⁹⁶

Taken collectively, these reflections—provided by a group of El Sistema’s most influential administrators and practitioners across the U.S.—confirm that the movement offers a powerful argument supporting the orchestra’s broader social value.

Nevertheless, the cultural politics discussed above undergird tensions that seem antithetical to the ethos of El Sistema. It remains to be seen who wields the power in this debate: orchestras, educators, or the mass public and youth best served by these programs. Mark Churchill is certainly not the first to argue that the bottom-up insurgence of culture in Venezuela conflicts with the top-down practices employed in the U.S. and European orchestra fields.⁹⁷ What’s more, the public resources necessary to support a cohesive and sustained movement like the one in Venezuela do not currently exist in the U.S. Richard Kessler, executive director of the Center for Arts Education in New York City, has recently suggested that it is not possible for El Sistema to gain the same kind of traction and support it has enjoyed in Venezuela, rendering the various American

⁹⁶ Interview with Daniel Berkowitz, 8 July 2011.

⁹⁷ Quoting in Heidi Waleson, “Southern Youthquake,” in *Symphony Magazine* 59, No. 2 (March– April, 2008): 28-29.

programs little more than reinforced youth orchestras.⁹⁸ Other skeptics exist, but one must search to find them. By and large, El Sistema continues to be praised for its rehabilitative capacities, despite the program's elitist origins and imperialistic undercurrents.

Music for Whose Good?

To conclude, I would like to discuss the various ways in which orchestras might benefit from El Sistema's recent transplantation to the U.S., and why they face an uphill climb if they choose to integrate these types of program into their current operating model. At a special 2008 meeting hosted by the League of American Orchestras, it quickly became apparent that, although El Sistema offered significant value to constituents, "most orchestras had more pressing issues, especially considering [their mission] is not quite aligned with El Sistema's core philosophy."⁹⁹ Several major ensembles—including the orchestras of Chicago, Detroit, and Boston—later turned down opportunities to launch their own El Sistema initiatives.¹⁰⁰ Even in Los Angeles and Baltimore, where two of the most successful programs exist, institutional investment remains relatively marginal. Indeed, if orchestras wish to fully integrate the ideals and practices of El Sistema, they must first implement major strategic changes, "turning everything upside down" to refocus their mission around community need.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Quoted in Lara Pellegrinelli, "The Road to an American 'El Sistema'," National Public Radio, 15 March 2011.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ According to Mark Churchill, "Chicago had a very developed plan to open a couple of núcleos in conjunction with the public schools, there were many conversations and trips to Venezuela. They created a whole initiative, but they felt that it was too much commitment, too much accountability, too much uncertainty, they got cold feet basically. Out of that momentum grew the YOURS Program at the Peoples' Music School which is really [one of the] leading núcleos in the country" (Interview with Mark Churchill).

¹⁰¹ Interview with Erik Holmgren.

It is not yet clear if this will happen on an industry-wide scale, or if such wide-reaching changes are even possible. Tony Woodcock believes that “orchestras are opportunistic, ... not strategic.”¹⁰² For them, El Sistema represents an opportunity that seems too good to ignore. But if they are to reap any of the organizational benefits offered by these programs, orchestras and musicians must reconsider what their contributions to society should be, and what structures and programs best deliver their value. For Stephanie Scherpf and many of the people interviewed for this chapter, El Sistema represents a possible solution, but “only if orchestras are ... authentically engaged in this work.”¹⁰³ Woodcock is even more forceful in this assertion, insisting that “you cannot associate the traditional orchestral mindset with El Sistema, because it will distort and destroy.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, the old way of doing things—designing one-off educational concerts to increase visibility and boost ticket and fundraising revenue—cannot be sustained. “The orchestra needs to be rebuilt, [and this] represents a better way to do it.”¹⁰⁵

Some administrators remain unconvinced of, or uninterested in, El Sistema’s power to reinvent the orchestra and drive large scale organizational change. Dan Trahey embraces the fact that audience development and organizational reinvention are not on OrchKids’ “to do” list, preferring instead to focus on the program’s student-centered mission and the mundane but important tasks his teachers face on a daily basis. He believes that using El Sistema as a tool for rebuilding orchestras is misguided: “There have been studies done that show people who don’t study music attend just as many

¹⁰² Interview with Tony Woodcock.

¹⁰³ Interview with Stephanie Scherpf.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Tony Woodcock.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Stanford Thompson.

concerts as those that do So I have a really hard time believing that we're building a generation of ticket buyers."¹⁰⁶ For Trahey, El Sistema is farmer's work, and getting your hands dirty is the only way to enact real social change.

Nevertheless, Trahey has joined other leaders from across the country to build a network of stakeholders dedicated to the continued diaspora of El Sistema, in all of its guises. Tricia Tunstall concedes that "it will never happen here the way it happened in Venezuela But in my moments of optimism, I hope that the sheer force of so many people moving in the same direction, even in their different ways, [can] create a real alternative here, a sense of a movement."¹⁰⁷ Whether or not professional orchestras play a major role in cultivating this movement remains to be seen. Tunstall would love to see orchestras embrace the idea, although she realizes the challenges associated with transforming a complex organization with deeply embedded traditions and cultural practices. She remains hopeful that orchestras like Baltimore and Los Angeles will continue to recognize the value of music education—and El Sistema in particular—for audiences and the organizations themselves: "In a way, they don't really have much to lose . . . Taking on a challenge of that magnitude—a challenge of changing enough to put a community mission closer to the center of their identity—would be a great thing to aspire towards."¹⁰⁸ For Tony Woodcock, a former orchestra manager himself, the outlook is less rosy:

The culture is just too strong, and for whatever reason, the level of suspicion to change, and the level of bad relationships that is endemic in the industry . . . can never be reversed. I think we need to create a new model of good practice [that allows] the musicians to take charge of their own destinies. In this country and culture I think we have a tendency to

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Daniel Trahey.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Tricia Tunstall.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

overthink. Instead, we should come up with a new R&D model, and after 3 or 5 years say to all the orchestras about to go out of business, this is what you should have been doing.¹⁰⁹

Much of the resistance to such fundamental change stems from the American Federation of Musicians, whose rules and contracts for professional orchestra musicians severely limit the possibilities of community work. Nevertheless, Woodcock's proposal is an interesting one, and makes a compelling argument for the sort of structural changes that could positively impact how orchestra's operate in and engage with the contemporary environment.

The future of El Sistema in America may indeed be bright, but it is difficult to predict what that future will look like, or how desirable its outcomes will be. On 14 March 2011, the New England Conservatory published a press release announcing plans to discontinue its association with Mark Churchill and El Sistema USA.¹¹⁰ NEC will continue to sponsor the Abreu Fellows program through at least 2015, but the initiative's advocacy and research arm will be operated and funded independently.¹¹¹ In point of fact, El Sistema USA had recently hired an education consultant who suggested that the initiative should increase its annual budget from \$125,000 to a \$400,000 to provide the depth of service necessary to spread the movement's message.¹¹² One staff member confided that the split "is a symptom of poorly managed expectations, a lack of vision and clarity of what is happening and where it needs to go." Despite the program's success, NEC felt it could not support such drastic growth, concentrating instead on

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Tony Woodcock.

¹¹⁰ To read the press release in its entirety, go to <http://necmusic.edu/el-sistema-usa-transition-plan>. See also Geoff Edgers, "Sour Note for Music Program," *Boston Globe*, 3 January 2011.

¹¹¹ As of the writing of this chapter, the organizational situation surrounding El Sistema USA is fluid and likely to change. For up to date information, please reference www.elsistemausa.org.

¹¹² Edgers, "Sour Note for Music Program."

teacher and administrator training through the Abreu Fellows program while allowing Churchill to design a national support organization that will serve as a hub for research, development, and networking resources.

How the future of American orchestras intersects with this story will depend on how ensembles position themselves and their mission in the years ahead. Eric Booth, an arts consultant and senior advisor to El Sistema USA, believes that Abreu's vision can effectively be used to transform the way in which our culture values classical music. In the following excerpt, Booth beautifully articulates how that vision is directly applicable to the crisis orchestras face:

[The movement's] truly radical promise ... is that it invites a rediscovery of the purposes and processes of classical music. As our field in the U.S. struggles to find the relevance of classical music to more than the small "arts club" percentage of our populace, El Sistema proposes answers that can change not only the life trajectories of our at-risk children, but the trajectory of our at-risk arts culture.¹¹³

Accomplishing both of these objectives simultaneously is easier said than done, however.

While El Sistema's philosophy can have tremendous impact, some larger orchestras have decided that it does not fit their core mission or resource profile.¹¹⁴ Others see it as a chance to redefine what it means to be an orchestra and a musician, inspiring a new

¹¹³ Booth goes on to list four characteristics that distinguish El Sistema from other music education programs: sustaining the dynamic tension between polarities (i.e. access vs. excellence, institutional structure and tradition vs. flexibility and improvisation, national curriculum vs. community-specific variations, individual vs. collective); the inquiry of continual improvement; embodying the mission; and the power of beauty, craft, and community (Eric Booth, "El Sistema's Open Secrets," unpublished essay, April 2010).

¹¹⁴ The orchestras of Philadelphia, Detroit, Boston, and Chicago are not alone in choosing not to pursue El Sistema-inspired partnerships. According to my conversations with "Roy," a retired Pittsburgh Symphony violinist and ardent supporter of the El Sistema movement, his former orchestra has also decided to forgo any El Sistema-inspired partnerships or programs (information shared during a conversation at "Community Engagement Through Music Education Summer Institute," presented by OrchKids in Baltimore, MD, 13 July 2011).

model rooted in community engagement and civic responsibility.¹¹⁵ One thing is for certain: If things do not change, orchestras run the risk of building “new structures on old foundations, foundations that have proven to have serious limitations that El Sistema has surmounted.”¹¹⁶

As orchestras enter the second decade of the twenty-first century, conversations regarding relevancy and legitimacy abound, prompting El Sistema supporters to join the conversation and offer a more compelling and sustainable vision for the future.¹¹⁷ One could argue that a comparison of El Sistema and the American orchestra is a study in contrasts: flexible vs. intransigent, passionate vs. precise, all-encompassing vs. exclusive. Recent history indicates, however, that these two entities can successfully engage in meaningful partnerships and increase their respective values. El Sistema can help orchestras “compose change” by questioning some of the fundamental tenets embedded in orchestral culture, including, of course, for whom this music is practiced and performed.¹¹⁸ The challenges orchestras face in adapting El Sistema mirror the tension between the everyday practice of mass culture and the institutionalization of high art.

The programs introduced earlier in this chapter—or at least the educational and social tenets associated with them—can be understood collectively as a means of alleviating that tension. El Sistema’s flexible, community-specific approach makes it

¹¹⁵ Dan Trahey suggests that smaller orchestras are more likely to successfully integrate the El Sistema philosophy into their mission: “Working with smaller orchestras is where this can really flourish. To do this in New Haven, or Orchestra Iowa, where there isn’t enough demand for a full-time orchestras, this type of program gives them work through a half-time teaching position. Also, younger orchestras are a lot more flexible, their contracts are more flexible” (Interview with Daniel Trahey).

¹¹⁶ Eric Booth, “El Sistema’s Open Secrets.”

¹¹⁷ Quoting Abreu Fellow and conductor Jonathan Govia, in Jonathan Govia, “A Cure for the Symphonic Crisis?,” *La Scena Musicale* (June 2011): 20.

¹¹⁸ The Los Angeles Philharmonic hosted a symposium on May 2010 titled “Composing change: YOLA and the El Sistema Movement” (for more, see Reed Johnson, “L.A.’s YOLA Takes Up Challenge of El Sistema Model,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 May 2010.

particularly difficult to adopt or translate elements of the program en masse. This ambiguity is reflected in the present chapter's analytic stance, which redefines structure as a symbolic set of norms that are refracted through artistic and organizational practice. Unlike New York and Louisville, whose respective organizational frameworks were relatively well-defined, El Sistema's structure is more symbolic and diffuse, making it difficult to generalize organizational characteristics and draw material connections. This difficulty is exacerbated by El Sistema's movement-like properties, which constantly transform to address local environmental pressures. Despite these challenges, El Sistema offers orchestras a plausible, if nebulous, recourse for change. It is too early to tell how this story will end, but Abreu's philosophy suggests that if orchestras break out of their cultural silos and reconcile their organizational agendas with the needs of their communities, they will continue to survive, and thrive, for decades to come.

Chapter Five

The Twenty-First Century Orchestra

Introduction

It should be clear by now that the orchestra is not simply a passive mechanism for artistic performance. Instead, orchestras are complex institutions that reflect their broader cultural environment, struggling to reconcile artistic ideals with the realities of twenty-first century life. The adaptive process accompanying this struggle—one of incremental change—is historically contingent, shaped by over a century of normative (and often conservative) practices that have determined what is legitimate and what is not. Yet history is not the only determinant of these challenges. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the modern symphony orchestra cannot be understood, artistically or otherwise, without consideration of its broader organizational structure. Simply put, structure matters: it defines channels of communication, determines distributions of power, and influences programming decisions.

As elaborated in the preceding chapters, organizational structure has played a decisive though often ignored role in shaping artistic practice and reception. In turn-of-the-century New York, the Philharmonic adopted a new form of organizing to subsidize increasingly expensive performances, but the rise of a new philanthropic elite had unanticipated consequences that fundamentally changed how the orchestra produced concerts. The Louisville Orchestra attempted a bold experiment in new music to

differentiate itself from larger competitors, only to find that limited financial resources and the conservative tastes of local audiences made long-term success impossible. More recently, the adaptation of El Sistema by American orchestras has highlighted deep-seated tensions between the goals of community engagement, social responsibility, and musical excellence. But what do these findings mean for the twenty-first century orchestra? What lessons can be learned from the successes and failures of past ensembles, and what sort of agency do these organizations—including their musicians, managers, board members, and audiences—have to enact change in such a normative environment?

Although it is problematic to distill the dissertation's analytical insights into a finite list of actionable solutions, one can certainly extrapolate what factors have inhibited change and innovation within the orchestra field. For example, the transformation explicated in Chapter 2 shows how the emergence of a new governance structure and competing logics voiced by musicians and philanthropists produced longstanding contention. Chapter 3's analysis suggests that, while repertoire plays an important role in organizational performance, it cannot compensate for structural deficiencies or consumer indifference. Even when technology is used to reach new markets, the absence of a connection with one's local community engenders new challenges. Finally, Chapter 4 highlights a broader tension regarding what the orchestra should be and for whom: a purveyor of great art for an elite few, or a conduit for public education and self-betterment? Although these competing visions may coexist, latent conflict is exacerbated by the orchestra's conservative ideology, hierarchical structure, and hand-to-mouth existence.

Upon reflection, a basic typology of challenges and opportunities for change can help us understand how orchestras might overcome the recurrent “crises” they face, not with a single, catch-all solution but through a diversity of answers that are context-specific. Some experts have argued that the rhetoric of crisis conceals orchestras’ unwillingness to make “tough decisions,” but this phenomenon represents a crisis of its own sort, exacerbated by inefficiencies embedded in the orchestra’s operating model.¹¹⁹ The degree to which an industry is in crisis may ebb and flow with the broader economic and artistic environment, but orchestras confront many of the same issues that have been haunting them since 1900. A recent editorial published by *The New York Times* blames finicky contributors, poor management, and disinterested audiences for “killing” the orchestra, but these are merely symptoms of a larger problem that is structural in nature.¹²⁰ Orchestras suffer not only from an inefficient operating model, but also entrenched ideological conflicts that breed divisiveness within and between orchestras and their publics.

Why such inefficiencies and contention have persisted for so long is unclear. Orchestras adopted their current form and practices in pursuit of legitimacy, but the research presented in this dissertation suggests that what was once deemed legitimate may be no longer. Pierre Boulez pointed out more than thirty years ago that “the orchestra’s organization is based on routines and contacts that are completely irrelevant to life as it is today,” but little has changed since then.¹²¹ Organizational theorist and orchestral consultant Paul Boulian has recently argued that we “must move from

¹¹⁹ See Russell Willis Taylor, “There Are No Crises, Only Tough Decisions,” keynote address at the League of American Orchestras National Conference, June 2010.

¹²⁰ Bernard Holland, “How to Kill Orchestras,” *The New York Times*, 29 June 2003.

¹²¹ Pierre Boulez, “Where Are We Now,” in *Orientalisms: Collected Writings*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967): 447–48.

interventions in which each symphony orchestra organization viewed as unique to its community ... to a set of institutionalized approaches that can be adapted to the specific needs of an individual orchestra.”¹²² Boulian concentrates on the demand-based issues of retention and subscription, but there are other factors internal to the organization that deserve further study. In her study of the 1996 Atlanta Symphony Orchestra strike, Mary Ann Glynn found that a difference in perceived resource needs lead to subsequent labor disputes.¹²³ According to her research, musicians identify principally with artistic quality, leveraging reputational resources to project an image of excellence, while board and staff members develop a more corporatized mentality in their search for financial resources. To be sure, “given the differences that exist structurally and symbolically in the orchestra, conflict between ideological elements in the organization’s identity seems almost inevitable.”¹²⁴

In an attempt to address these differences, the Mellon Foundation organized and supported a multi-year meeting for a variety of orchestra constituents from around the country. Convened in early 1998, the Orchestra Forum sought to illuminate and articulate the organizational challenges faced by the industry, hiring consultants (Richard Evans and John McCann) and academics (Paul DiMaggio and J. Richard Hackman) to moderate a conversation between musicians, managers, conductors, and trustees. Based on these conversations, Mellon produced a report that outlined some of the critical issues confronting the field: deteriorated institutional and artistic leadership, inadequate

¹²²Paul Boulian, “On the Path to Serious Organizational Change,” *Harmony* 5 (Oct., 1997): 45.

¹²³Mary Ann Glynn, “When Cymbals Become Symbols: Conflict over Organizational Identity within a Symphony Orchestra,” *Organization Science* 11, no. 3 (2000): 285-298.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 287.

musician oversight, shifting community expectations, and conservative programming.¹²⁵ They found that, as internal and external measurements of success began to diverge, orchestras struggled to meet the distinct demands of musicians, traditional donors, and a broader audience. Following the Forum's first meeting, the Rockefeller Foundation initiated a long-term grant program to help orchestras strengthen their strategies, leadership, and artistic values. Whether or not the program was a success remains to be seen, but it seems that, with a few exceptions, no truly innovative or new models of organizing have emerged.

Nevertheless, one could certainly argue that orchestras are in no worse a place than they were one hundred years ago, and that their future is as secure as it has ever been. After all, more orchestras are producing more music at a higher level than ever before. Responding to a blog post written by NEC president Tony Woodcock and provocatively titled "American Orchestras: Yes, It's a Crisis," musician Nathan Kahn denounces such inflammatory rhetoric:

Is it a crisis? As far as musicians and audiences, no. As far as incompetent and lazy managers and do nothing boards, yes. Here in Colorado Springs, and most recently in Honolulu, new orchestra organizations were formed that included board members who were and are passionate about classical music, and were not just sitting on a board to enhance their social/business prestige. So...a message to these kinds of managers and boards: The music will go on, with or without you.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ The original meeting of the Forum featured 14 musicians, 10 executive directors, 6 conductors, 12 trustees, and 11 other staff members from ten mid-sized orchestras. This group would later be expanded to include several larger orchestras, including the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestra (Catherine Wichterman, "The Orchestra Forum: A Discussion of Symphony Orchestras in the U.S.," 1998 Annual Report, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (available at http://www.mellon.org/news_publications/annual-reports-essays/presidents-essays/the-orchestra-forum-the-orchestra-forum-a-discussion-of-symphony-orchestras-in-the-us).

¹²⁶ Nathan Kahn, in response to blog post by Tony Woodcock, published 5 May 2011 (see <http://necmusic.wordpress.com/2011/05/04/american-orchestras-yes-it%E2%80%99s-a-crisis/>).

From my perspective, the crisis facing orchestras is real, and although many of the institutions mentioned in this dissertation have survived, and even thrived, in past environments, recent history suggests that this may not be the case for long. In times of economic volatility, the structural deficiencies inherent to orchestral organizations become more pronounced, squeezing their already limited resources and pushing some to the brink of collapse.

Familiar Challenges, Unprecedented Turmoil

While orchestras have long struggled to balance their budgets without donor contributions, volatile markets combined with stagnant ticket sales and declining corporate support have made for an especially arduous environment in recent years. Since 2009, no fewer than five orchestras have filed for bankruptcy, and several others have experienced lengthy labor disputes or work stoppages. The Honolulu Symphony filed for chapter 7 bankruptcy in 2009, forcing the organization to liquidate all of its assets due to mounting debts and waning local support.¹²⁷ The orchestras of New Mexico (2011) and Syracuse (2011) have recently met similar fates, suggesting a trend that requires explication. The dismal state of the global economy only partially explains the acute difficulties facing American orchestras. One could argue that they have grown too big to sustain themselves in lean times, becoming increasingly dependent on contributed and endowment-related income. There is also mounting evidence that administrators are exploiting these difficulties as an excuse to reinvent what it means to be an orchestra, both artistically and organizationally. Such transformative rhetoric has been met with stiff

¹²⁷ This is not to say that the Honolulu Symphony had no community support. In 2011, after two years without a professional orchestra, a group of Honolulu businessmen and women worked with musicians to form a new and more modest orchestra for the city.

resistance from the musicians' union, leading to increasingly corrosive labor relations that have grabbed national headlines and adversely affected some of the country's largest orchestras.

Perhaps the most prominent example is the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO), which experienced a 26-week strike during their 2010-11 season. Although this was not the longest labor-induced work stoppage in American orchestral history, it was certainly the most contentious. The strike stemmed from proposed wage concessions of over 30 % and newly required community engagement activities, but reflected a growing divide between the orchestra's musicians and upper-level administrators. Musicians saw the proposed contract as an attempt by management to overreach its artistic purview and redefine the role of the orchestral musician, while management insisted it was simply trying to put the orchestra on firmer footing for the future. Although the musicians continued to perform as a separate entity during the strike, the DSO's regular subscription concerts in Orchestra Hall were uniformly canceled, while musicians and management worked to dismantle each other's credibility. Claims of ineptitude quickly entered the mainstream press, and a growing group of board members began to waver in their support of the orchestra's CEO and executive director, Anne Parsons.¹²⁸ Dissension among musicians quickly spread to other orchestras across the country, leading to publically-contested negotiations that ended with a new base salary of \$79,000, down from nearly \$105,000 the previous year.

Although the DSO's musicians eventually settled for a reduced contract, such a dramatic pay cut prompted concerns that Detroit would no longer be able to compete with

¹²⁸ For more detailed coverage of the strike, see Mark Stryker's articles in the *Detroit Free Press* (<http://www.freep.com/section/COL17/Mark-Stryker>).

other top orchestras from around the country. Indeed, several principal players, including the orchestra's concertmistress and the entire percussion section, left the orchestra for other opportunities. Yet apart from a handful of supporters from the city's wealthiest suburbs, much of Detroit remained unaffected when the orchestra stopped presenting concerts. Despite all of the publicity created by the strike, most people seemed to be more concerned with other issues more relevant to their daily lives. Every orchestra would like to say that it is an irreplaceable cultural asset, but what if its concerts reach only five percent—or less—of the population? The DSO's management recognizes this disconnect between institution and community, and is working with other local organizations to reinvigorate the city's commitment to classical music. By downsizing and reinvesting in community engagement, the orchestra can begin to rebuild its brand and prove its value to the city of Detroit. For many musicians, however, such a dramatic reorientation means a reduction in artistic prestige, emphasizing the potency of prevailing cultural norms.

Similar labor-related conflicts have been played out recently in bankruptcy court. In April of 2011, the Philadelphia Orchestra filed to reorganize and renegotiate its existing contracts in an attempt to prevent future cash flow problems. According to the orchestra's management, "operating funds are rapidly dwindling and will [soon] be exhausted, [and] while the Orchestra does not have any debt, we are operating at a significant loss with a structural deficit of \$14.5 million."¹²⁹ This deficit—the difference between general operating costs and ticket sales—reflects a reality shaped both by geography and history. Like Detroit, Philadelphia is predominately African American, a demographic that has traditionally been underserved by orchestras and other high art

¹²⁹ Philadelphia Orchestra Press Release, 16 April 2011 (<http://philorchtoday.org/news/april-2011/reorganization-press-release>).

institutions. As fewer wealthy elites from the city's Main Line neighborhood attend concerts, the orchestra has struggled to maintain community support, both through fundraising and ticket sales.

In the mid-2000s, the orchestra experienced unprecedented lacunae in administrative, board, and artistic leadership, struggling to fill vacancies for executive director, board chair, and music director. The uncertainty resulting from these openings was exacerbated by financially disadvantageous contracts with musicians, vendors, and partners such as the Kimmel Center and the Philadelphia Pops. For the orchestra, chapter 11 bankruptcy represents an expedited means of renegotiating these contracts and jumpstarting the strategic change process. Nevertheless, musicians and patrons worry that the bankruptcy will impact the orchestra's sterling reputation and the health of its brand, and rightly so. As the first major orchestra to file for bankruptcy in recent history, Philadelphia is entering uncharted territory. From the musicians' point of view, the orchestra has more than enough assets to cover current costs, including a \$120 million endowment from which to draw on.¹³⁰ From management's perspective, however, accessing restricted endowment funds would only postpone the inevitable, as the structural deficit mentioned above continues to grow and threaten the orchestra's future.

One might wonder why local foundations, donors, or the board itself has not stepped in to bailout the orchestra, but a relatively simple explanation exists: they have done it before, and it does little to solve the broader issue at hand. The Pew Charitable Trusts has provided the Philadelphia Orchestra with emergency funding several times since 2000, but these grants were predicated on an understanding that such "rescue aid"

¹³⁰ The size of the endowment could be considered as high as \$140 million, if one includes the Academy of Music's investment assets, which the orchestra oversees.

would not become an annual crutch. Simply bailing out the orchestra is in essence prolonging a problem that will require further fixing down the road. An analogy to the 2008 financial crisis is apt: without addressing the structural weaknesses causing the crisis, the system will remain broken and markets will remain unpredictable. In this sense, the Philadelphia Orchestra's bankruptcy proceedings are less about immediate cash flow concerns and more about long-term stability. In October 2011, the musicians surprisingly accepted a new contract that included a fifteen percent pay cut and the loss of guaranteed pension funds, choosing to resolve the conflict instead of inciting a drawn-out labor dispute. Although several musicians—including principal clarinetist Ricardo Morales—have decided to leave the orchestra, this decision sets an important precedent regarding how orchestras use bankruptcy to mediate contention and reinvent themselves.

Whether these tactics solve the longstanding financial problems associated with orchestral performance remains to be seen, however. Several months before Philadelphia filed for bankruptcy, the Louisville Orchestra used a similar strategy to try and renegotiate its CBA, or collective bargaining agreement, with musicians. In December of 2010, the orchestra's board and CEO Robert Birman determined that the group was presenting too many concerts, and employing too many musicians, given the city's limited demand for classical music. By shrinking the orchestra, they hoped to focus on building a culture of appreciation and investment that had thus far been missing from the community. Mayor Gregg Fischer stepped in to help with contract negotiations, noting that "the orchestra is very important to Louisville, and it's part of our cultural footprint... [But] it seems that once a decade or so there's always a crisis around the orchestra, and

we can't continue to operate that way.”¹³¹ Despite successfully navigating bankruptcy, the orchestra has thus far been unable to meet musicians' wage and work demands, prompting management to take the unprecedented step of auditioning non-union replacements.¹³² Any musicians that take the audition will likely be blacklisted from future union job opportunities. With the orchestra sitting atop the American Federation of Musicians' "Unfair Employer" list, the entire industry is watching to see how things will unfold in Louisville.

Given these and other developments, it seems safe to say that the strained relationship between orchestral musicians and management has reached its breaking point.¹³³ The implicit goal of the musicians' union—to advocate for higher wages, better work conditions, and more autonomy—conflicts with the needs of the institutions themselves. This tension reflects a broader issue concerning who orchestras exist to serve: musicians, wealthy patrons, or the broader community. The continued bureaucratization of orchestras has been understood as a necessary process, especially given ever-growing fundraising and administrative demands. Yet broader cultural trends suggest that these organizations have become over professionalized, growing increasingly dependent on complex administrative structures that no longer serve the music itself.

Collective interest in orchestral music—and in the arts in general—has been declining for some time. Recent indices measuring the health of America's arts sector

¹³¹ Quoting Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, in an article from *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, 24 August 2011.

¹³² For a discussion regarding this development, see Elizabeth Kramer, "Louisville Orchestra Begins Seeking Replacement Musicians," *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, 24 October 2011 (<http://www.courier-journal.com/article/20111024/NEWS01/310240056/1003/Louisville-Orchestra-begin-seeking-replacements-musicians>)

¹³³ In Denver, Colorado, two-thirds of the orchestra's board of directors resigned after unsuccessful negotiations with musicians. They cited musicians' unwillingness to compromise as their reason for stepping down (Kyle MacMillan, "20 Colorado Symphony Orchestra board members resign," *Denver Post*, 25 September 2011 (see http://www.denverpost.com/commented/ci_18972288).

suggest that artists and arts organizations struggle to compete with other forms of mass produced entertainment.¹³⁴ Audiences for and investors in cultural events have shrunk considerably since 1982, with only 34.6% of the adult population attending a single museum or performance of jazz, opera, classical music, ballet, or theater in 2008.¹³⁵ Even with the advent of the internet and various digital technologies, it seems as though fewer people create and distribute art today than they did twenty years ago.¹³⁶ Some researchers have argued that the reasons for this apparent decline are rooted in insufficient arts learning opportunities.¹³⁷ Too little attention has been focused on stimulating interest in, and cultivating demand for, art and art making. When considering American orchestras specifically, paid concert attendance has declined by over 16% since 2000, raising questions concerning the alignment of value, capacity, and support structures in twenty-first century orchestral life.¹³⁸

Past and Present Converge

Before offering a framework to help scholars and practitioners think about ways in which orchestras might effectively tackle these challenges, I present some new data that captures the structural deficit embedded in the orchestra's nonprofit operating model.

¹³⁴ Mike Boehm, "New National Arts Index Measures Art, Entertainment," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 January 2011 (see <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/la-et-0124-arts-index-20110124,0,3313531.story>).

¹³⁵ National Endowment for the Arts, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, Research Report No. 49 (November 2009).

¹³⁶ There is growing interest in how to measure and define alternative forms of engagement with art through technology. Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Alan Brown have produced a multi-modal framework to describe arts participation, arguing that "the environment in which arts organizations function has changed dramatically.... Alternatives for arts and entertainment activities have proliferated, and expectations for personalization and individual control over those experiences have increased" (Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Alan S. Brown, "Beyond Attendance: A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation," Research Report 54, National Endowment for the Arts, 2011).

¹³⁷ Laura Zakaras and Julia F. Lowell, *Cultivating Demand for the Arts: Arts Learning, Arts and Engagement, and State Arts Policy*, RAND Corp., 2008.

¹³⁸ AMS Planning and Research, "Beyond Sustainable ... Becoming Vital," Presentation at League of American Orchestras National Conference on 8 June 2011.

The four graphs that follow provide an updated look at the income gap phenomenon introduced in chapter one. Remember that this gap represents the difference between total expenses and earned income, measured here as the sum of performance income, recording royalties, and gains (or losses) on endowment and other investments. This difference has historically been filled by grants and donations from foundations, corporations, and wealthy individuals, whose contributions have become an essential but unpredictable part of modern-day orchestral economics.

The last comprehensive calculation of the income gap in America's "major" orchestras was conducted by McKinsey consultants John Macomber and John T. Wooster in 1972, and later republished and expanded by Philip Hart.¹³⁹ To my knowledge, no one has extended these findings to the present day using an equivalent sample. Figures 5.1-5.4 reflect financial data drawn from the League of American Orchestras' annual statistical reports, which were accessed both through their physical archives in New York (1972-84) and digital files provided by the League's Knowledge Center (1985-2009).¹⁴⁰ The average values for total expenses and earned income were calculated using a sample of approximately thirty U.S. orchestras. Although inconsistencies in the League's data necessitated some slight modifications to which orchestras were included, these findings are roughly comparable to Macomber and Wooster's 1972 analysis.¹⁴¹ Tables with detailed data for each year are reproduced in Figures 6.3-6.6 in the Appendix.

¹³⁹ See Figure 1.2 in this dissertation for Hart's graph, which contains actual data from Macomber and Wooster's study (John Macomber and John T. Wooster, "How to Resolve the Growing Financial Crisis of Our Symphony Orchestra," in *Symphony News* [June, 1972]) and estimated projections from 1971-81 (Hart, *Orpheus in the New World*, 318).

¹⁴⁰ Thanks to Jan Wilson, Director of Research at the League, for sharing the data necessary for this analysis.

¹⁴¹ The original set of orchestras included the twenty-eight largest ensembles (by budget size) that reported data to the League of American Orchestras. In 1972, they were: the American Symphony Orchestra (New

Each graph highlights a different phenomenon related to the much belabored income gap, which orchestras have been unable to curtail or prevent. Figure 5.1 reflects the “classic” income gap confronting America’s largest orchestras, and demonstrates how dependent America’s largest orchestras have become on their endowment funds. The massive drops in earned revenue reflect the dot-com bubble (2001) and the global financial crisis (2008), which negatively impacted the stock market and adversely affected orchestras with mega-endowments. The increased significance of endowment and other investment-related income to orchestras’ operating budgets does not fully explain the growing gap between expenses and earned income, however. Figure 5.2 suggests that, while overall expenses have steadily continued to rise, performance income (or earned income without investment-related gains) has remained relatively stagnant since 1990. In that time, the average annual cost associated with producing orchestral concerts has more than doubled, while the percentage of total costs covered by ticket sales has steadily fallen from 50% to

York), and the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minnesota (Minneapolis-St. Paul), National (Washington, D.C.), New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, San Antonio, Seattle, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Utah. The following modifications or substitutions were made in an attempt to mitigate inconsistencies and missing data: 1972-73—no data for the American Symphony Orchestra; 1974—New Jersey and Honolulu added; 1975—no modifications; 1976—no modifications; 1977—North Carolina and Syracuse added; 1978—no modifications; 1979—no modifications; 1980—Oregon, St. Paul, and San Diego added; Honolulu, North Carolina, and New Jersey no longer included; 1981—no modifications; 1982—no data for Kansas City; 1983—no modifications; 1984—no modifications; 1985—no modifications; 1986—no modifications; 1987—San Diego no longer included; 1988—San Diego added, New Orleans and San Antonio no longer included; 1989—no modifications; 1990—New Jersey and Columbus added, Denver no longer included; 1991—San Antonio added, Syracuse no longer included; 1992—no modifications; 1993—Florida added, Rochester no longer included; 1994—Rochester added, St. Louis no longer included; 1995—Colorado added, San Diego no longer included; 1996—St. Louis added, Colorado no longer included; 1997—Colorado added; 1998—Buffalo not included; 1999—Buffalo added, St. Louis not included (digital data incomplete, supplemented by archival data); 2000—St. Louis added; 2001—Fort Worth, Nashville, Pacific added; Columbus and Houston not included; 2002—Houston added; 2003—no modifications; 2004—Columbus added, San Antonio not included; 2005—Cleveland not included; 2006—no modifications; 2007—no modifications; 2008—San Diego added; Oregon, Dallas, and Columbus not included; 2009—Dallas added.

Figure 5.1 Average Income Gap of America's Thirty Largest Orchestras (1971-2009)

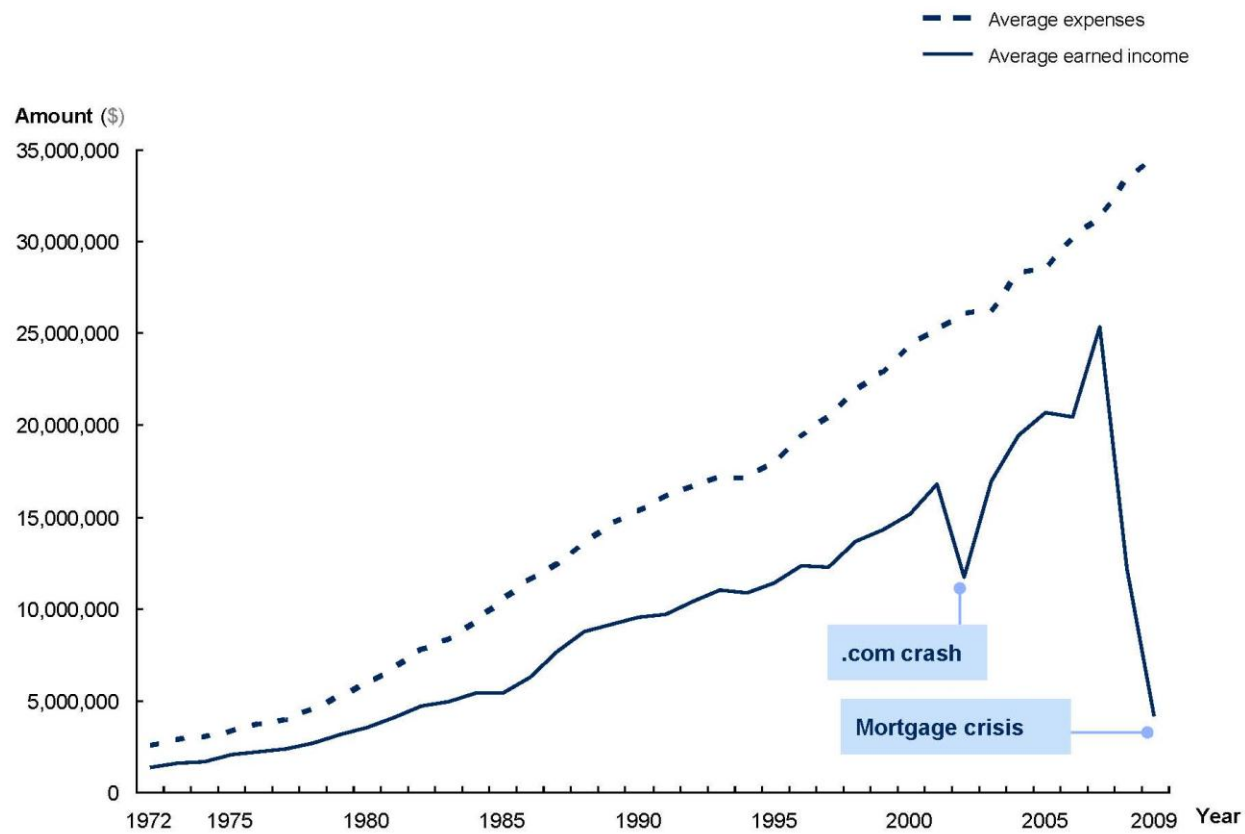


Figure 5.2 Average Income Gap of America's Thirty Largest Orchestras (1990-2009), without endowment income

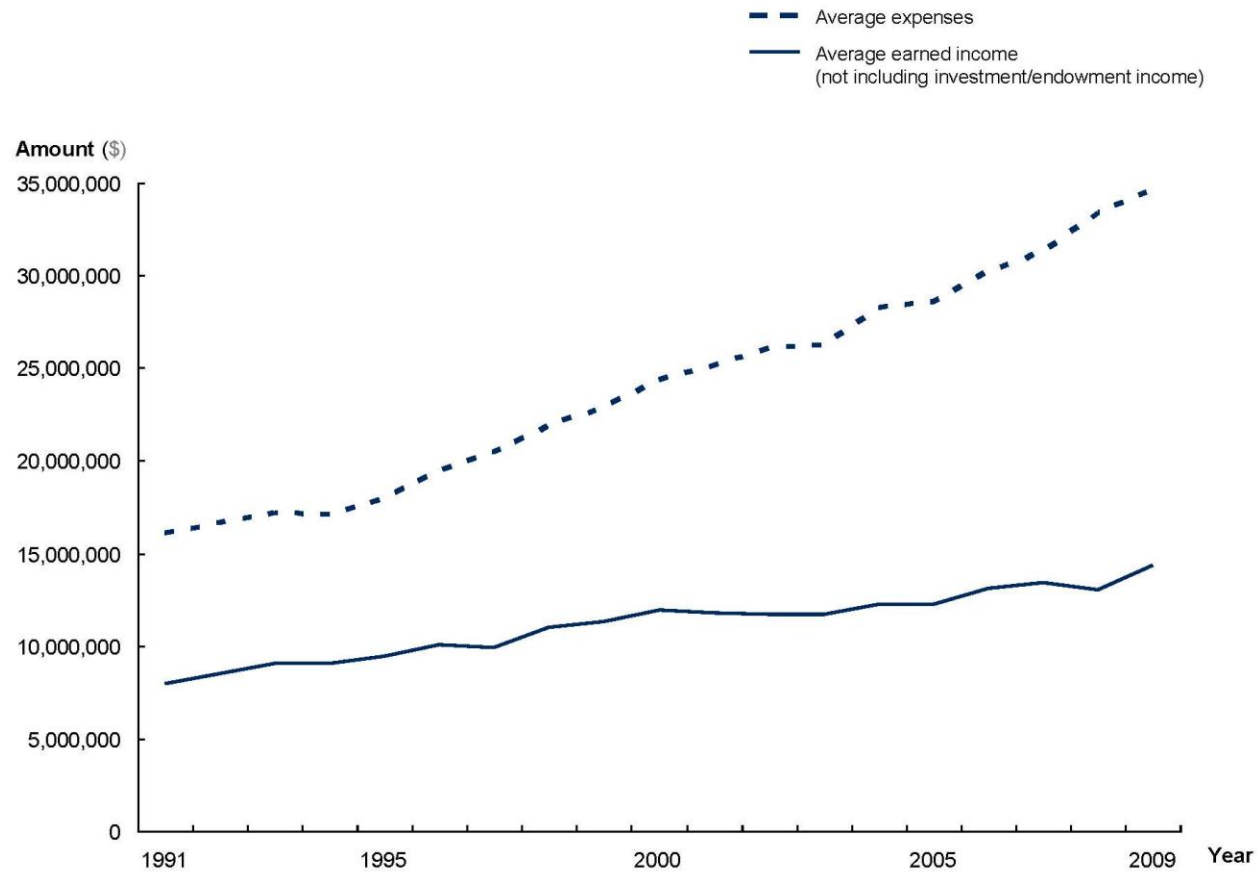


Figure 5.1 Average Income Gap of America's Thirty Largest Orchestras (1971-2009), adjusted for inflation

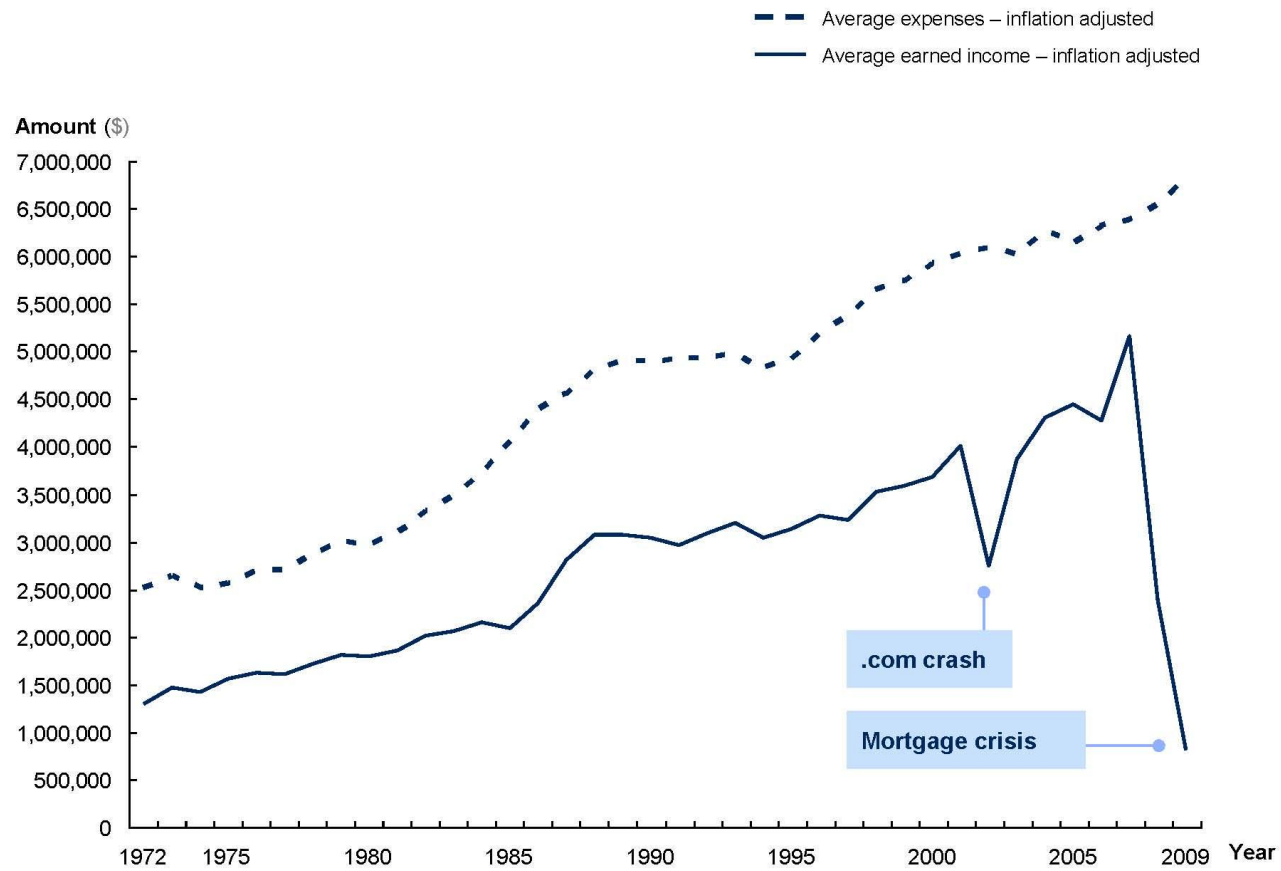
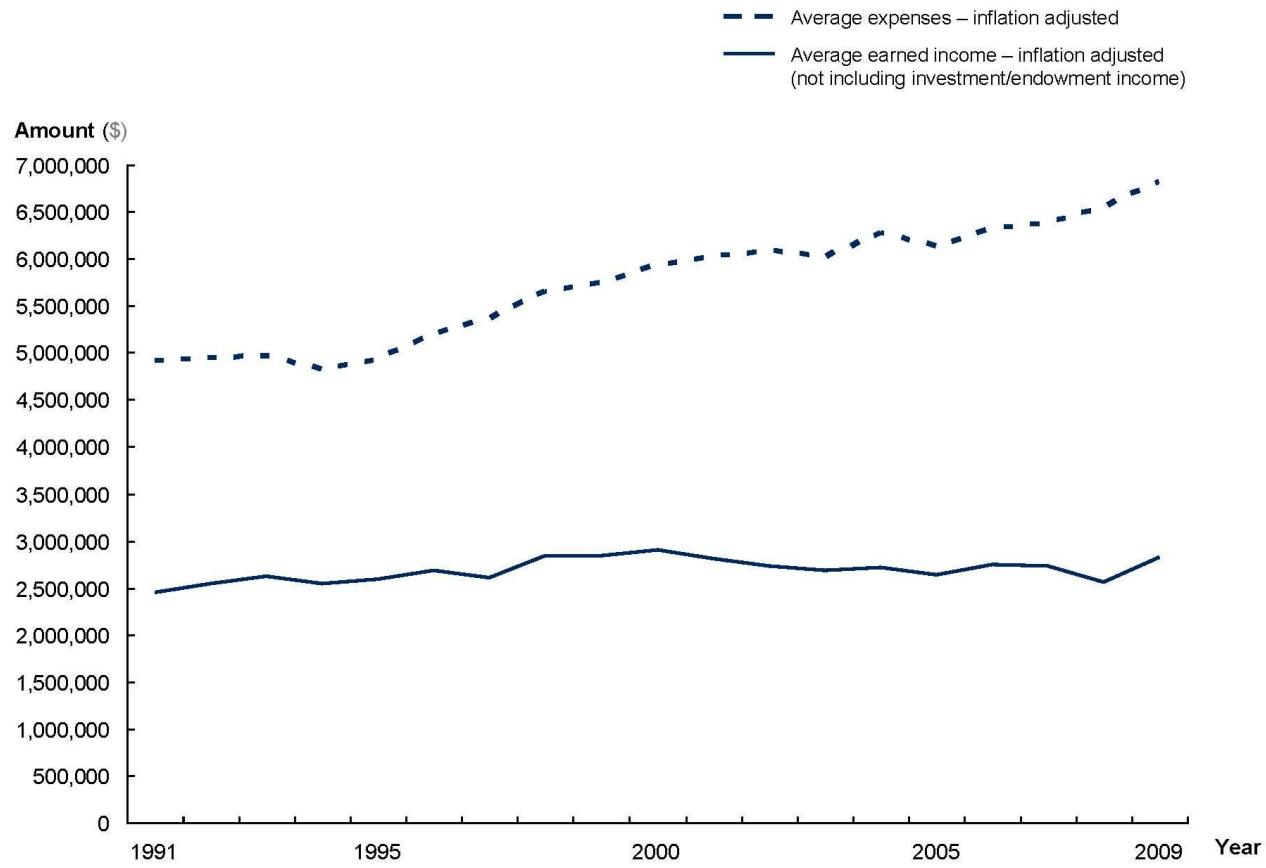


Figure 5.1: Average Income Gap of America's Thirty Largest Orchestras (1990-2009), w/o endowment income and adj. for inflation



40%.¹⁴² Even when adjusted for inflation, “Baumol’s Curse” continues to haunt the twenty-first century orchestra (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

This data indicates that, from a financial perspective, orchestras have transformed from service to fundraising organizations, becoming increasingly reliant on private contributions and overinflated investments to subsidize ever-growing operating costs. The collective inability of orchestras to correct for shifts in the economic and cultural environments suggests a paradox. Despite enduring one crisis after another, orchestras persist, both organizationally and artistically. How have these institutions maintained themselves in such unfavorable conditions? It is well documented that organizational forms and practices ossify overtime, becoming legitimated and routinized despite efficiency concerns.¹⁴³ The “myth and ceremony” that results from this process becomes self-fulfilling, creating value through repetition and familiarity. According to Douglas Dempster,

The performing arts, like education and health care, have grown not through greater productivity, but through greater perceived value.... The key to understanding the economics of symphony orchestras and other performing arts is not in understanding the perils of productivity lag.... The key is to understand how these organizations control the perceived value of their service in order to keep pace with highly inflationary costs so as to sustain growth in earned income.¹⁴⁴

However orchestras seem unable to “keep pace” with changes in their environment, struggling to reconcile their artistic mission with the broader expectations of society. It

¹⁴² This value is inflated by the relatively large performance income levels of the top ten orchestras (by budget size). When these data are not included, the percent of costs covered by ticket sales approaches 30%.

¹⁴³ See for example John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony,” *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (1977): 340-63.

¹⁴⁴ Douglas J. Dempster, “The Wolf Report and Baumol’s Curse: The Economic Health of American Symphony Orchestras in the 1990s and Beyond,” *Harmony* (October 2002): 21.

seems as if their plight is one of subsistence, surviving on wealthy donations to produce and maintain an art form that is revered by few and irrelevant for many.

Yet strong evidence exists, and reminds us, that orchestras have done more than simply survive in the twentieth century. As shown throughout this dissertation, American orchestras have created an enviable artistic legacy and developed an organizational framework that has helped classical musicians make a living. Despite the recent recession, at least eleven U.S. orchestras boast a base salary of over \$100,000, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic leading the way.¹⁴⁵ To understand these advancements, however, we must couch them within the broader historical narrative laid out in the preceding chapters. Thus, I have constructed a loose framework or typology to describe the kinds of challenges orchestras face, and categorize the ways in which these challenges are being addressed. The internal structure governing how orchestras organize plays an important role in this story, especially considering the contentious labor relation issues discussed earlier in this chapter. These tensions are exacerbated by a lack of resources that makes it difficult to cultivate healthy intra-organizational relationships. External structures shape how orchestras engage with diverse and sometimes conflicting local communities. The lack of consensus regarding what orchestras are, and for whom, makes it difficult to form substantive partnerships and reach new audiences. Figure 5.5 offers a summary of how arts organizations are beginning to address these structural constraints.

Orchestras also face great challenges—and opportunities—in the realms of artistic production and consumption. The industry has not yet decided how best to use twenty-first century technologies to reach contemporary audiences, a challenge made particularly

¹⁴⁵ The base salary for Los Angeles Philharmonic musicians was \$136,000 in 2011-12. These large salaries conflict with the relatively meager wages earned by musicians in per service orchestras (see chapter 1 for a discussion of this phenomenon).

Figure 5.5 Shifting Structural Characteristics of Performing Arts Organizations¹⁴⁶

Old Structural Features	Emerging Structural Features
A mission that focuses on organizational outputs and achievements	A mission that focuses on community impacts and value
A singular creative vision and direction, handled by one or a few insiders	Pluralized curation that includes dialogue with external voices
A select, high-level artistic group, separate from the community and presenting to it via formal seasons of activity	Acknowledging and embracing the creative capacities in the community — guided by, and working with, professionals, year-round, on demand
Strong boundaries to the organization, serving to differentiate it from others and from the wider community	Loose organizational boundaries, porous to the community, that blur distinctions between organizations and emphasize commonalities
Specialist administrative departments with consistent technical competencies working in hierarchies	"Post-specialist" workers with varying responsibilities, working in artistically centered teams
Marketing of products to passive consumers	Engagement of audiences as active participants in process as well as product
Boards as core funders and solicitors for established works	Boards as champions of change and as informed ambassadors to enroll others
Balance sheets focus on building long-term permanent assets	Financial profile that emphasizes working capital and reserves, including risk capital

acute by the orchestra's historical aversion to such advancements. The artistic experience produced through live performance remains at the center of what orchestras do, and rightfully so, but it remains unclear if or how these conventions might be altered to meet today's challenges. Orchestral institutions face significant barriers to change, but they also face exciting opportunities for innovation through the adaptation of new structures (both internal and external), technologies, and artistic practices. These facets of organizational life are not disparate, but are instead interconnected and historically contingent. As orchestras wrestle with an uncertain future, they must dislodge arbitrary industry standards and redefine what success means, and how it is achieved, in the twenty-first century.

¹⁴⁶ Originally published in Richard Evans, "Entering Upon Novelty: Policy and Funding Issues for a New Era in the Arts," *Grantmakers in the Arts Reader* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2010).

Models for the Future

Perhaps now more than ever, serious discussion concerning the future of classical music and its place in contemporary society pervades public discourse surrounding the arts. One need only peruse a handful of industry blogs or articles to sense what seems to be a watershed moment in the history of classical music in America.¹⁴⁷ This discussion is particularly rich in the context of symphony orchestras, whose massive resource needs and cultural import make them ideal targets for revisionist commentary. Although there may be no single answer to the questions facing orchestras today, several new models are being tested around the country. Some of these innovations represent a stark departure from accepted practice, while others have historical antecedents discussed earlier in this dissertation. Orchestras are beginning to fundamentally rethink how their mission should be reflected through their organizational structures, community relationships, technologies, and artistic practices. Each of these areas signifies unique but interrelated opportunities for substantive change and renewed success.

The internal organization of orchestras has played a significant role in their collective successes and failures, but little if any work adequately explores this process. In chapter 2, I argued that the New York Philharmonic's reorganization efforts carried important structural and artistic consequences that shaped its identity. These structural consequences include both the business model being employed by the organization in question, as well as the embedded and often contentious relationships between employees (musicians) and managers (administrative staff and board). The challenges associated with orchestral labor relations are not new, but reflect a steady process of

¹⁴⁷ For example, see Greg Sandow's online "book" about the rebirth of classical music (<http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2011/09/my-book-improved.html>), or various other online outlets dedicated to the performing arts (www.artsjournal.com, www.insidethearts.com, www.createequity.org,).

bureaucratization. Nearly fifty years ago, musician and union leader Lew Waldeck pointed out that “symphony musicians began to think about the causes for their unrest. They thought hard. They thought for a long time.... They thought, “We are not like any other union.... We are not only the workers, we are the means of production. We are the delivery system, We own the tools of production. We are the product.””¹⁴⁸ This kind of rhetoric has ossified orchestral labor relations. Musicians blame management for most organizational failures, but have little recourse for recompense due to their detachment from the administrative process. Such limited involvement is structurally determined, reflecting a division of power between musicians and managers that is historically contingent.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) has recently implemented a new forum encouraging musicians to contribute administratively and openly question managerial practices. Faced with financial challenges and widespread disaffection among constituents, the ASO has cultivated a collaborative organizational culture that eliminates conventional silos and increases synergy. The orchestra regularly holds meetings in what they affectionately call the “war room,” bringing together staff and ensemble members to participate in the strategy and decision making process.¹⁴⁹ Leveraging musician insight and manpower to tackle larger organizational challenges evokes the “community of musicians” approach championed by Ernest Fleischmann, Pierre Boulez, and others. The corresponding cooperative model allows for greater flexibility but conflicts with the highly professionalized and hierarchical structures favored by most complex

¹⁴⁸ Lew Waldeck, “Some Plain Talk about Symphony Orchestras,” reprinted in *Senza Sordino: The Official Publication of the International conference of symphony and Opera Musicians* 39, no. 2 (March 2001): 2-3.

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed explanation of Atlanta’s “war room,” see Lela Tepavac, *Fearless Journeys: Innovation in Five American Orchestras* (New York: League of American Orchestras), 2010.

organizations. The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is perhaps the best known musicians' cooperative, vesting total organizational power and responsibility with its ensemble members, but others exist.¹⁵⁰ Both the New York-based Knights orchestra and the Louisiana Philharmonic employ a self-governing scheme, but the artistic flexibility and freedom associated with cooperative organizations comes at a price. The community and financial resources necessary to support a large-scale symphony orchestra require intensive fundraising efforts. Without a full-time development staff and well-connected board members, six-figure musician salaries would surely become a thing of the past.

These evolutions do not mean that the age of the corporate nonprofit orchestra is over, however, nor do they imply that nineteenth-century forms will replace current modes of organizing. Instead, orchestras are adapting innovations through a process of bricolage, reinventing the past to develop and expand their value for a new generation of listeners. One means of structural recombination that has become increasingly prevalent across the nonprofit sector is social enterprise. Simply defined as a nonprofit owned, revenue-generating entity that contributes to an organization's mission, social enterprises represent a potentially more reliable income stream than charitable support, and can foster a culture of self-sufficiency. The concept has added significant value to a host of nonprofit industries, but the performing arts have yet to tap into its possibilities. Many organizations traditionally categorized as 501(c)3s have also begun to explore the regulatory and funding possibilities associated with for-profit and public sector

¹⁵⁰ One cooperative chamber orchestra which has recently received considerable attention is A Far Cry, a Boston-based string ensemble founded in 2007. According to co-founder and violinist Jesse Irons, "we take advantage of our musicians' non-musical skills, electing a violist with prior banking experience as treasurer and bookkeeper, a violinist with a particularly sunny personality as fundraiser, and a cellist with deeply-held charitable ideals as a coordinator of partnerships with other worthy causes" (email correspondence with Jess Irons, 22 October 2011).

organizations. The recent development of the “L3C,” or Low-Profit Limited Liability Company, may offer a model for the future. L3Cs provide layered returns for a variety of investors—from foundations to social and even market investors. By freeing up capital and encouraging experimentation, this model attempts to strengthen social service organizations with financially sustainable practices.

Several performing arts institutions have benefited from these blended or hybrid structures, but most come from outside the orchestra world. For example, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) employed a hybrid commercial/subsidized model for a recent production of *Matilda*, engaging several philanthropists to serve as a safety net and mitigate the risk associated with most for-profit investments.¹⁵¹ Orchestras in Columbus, Ohio (Columbus Symphony) and Washington, D.C. (National Symphony) have partnered with other local arts centers to share administrative resources, diffusing financial liability and becoming more efficient and embedded in their artistic communities. Still other structural innovations address the reality that some organizations persist despite a lack of purpose. The Merce Cunningham Dance Company exercises an “epoch model” approach, which presumes a limited organizational lifecycle with a predetermined end-date.¹⁵² When the Company’s artistic mission is sufficiently met, the organization will cease to exist. This frees up financial and human resources, benefiting artists’ creativity while increasing the fungibility of the arts sector as a whole.

The external social structure in which orchestras operate also presents a series of opportunities for innovation and change. The story of El Sistema (Chapter 4) suggests that, to thrive, artists must form deep connections with each other and their communities.

¹⁵¹ Alistar Smith, “RSC pioneers unique producing model on Matilda,” *The Stage News*, 25 May 2011.

¹⁵² See David McGraw’s chapter in Edward Clapp (ed.), *20Under40: Re-Inventing the Arts and Arts Education for the 21st Century* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010).

As service organizations dedicated to performance, orchestras explicitly depend on their audiences for survival. This was as true in the nineteenth century as it is today. According to musicologist John Spitzer,

Entrepreneur-conductors and enterprise orchestras thrived during the nineteenth century because they expressed and fit in with prevailing social values. They were the musical embodiment of the spirit of enterprise, initiative and commerce fostered by nineteenth-century capitalism.... Entrepreneur conductors and their orchestras also fit in with the new democratic values of the age and the broadening of public culture in which the middle classes gained access to cultural goods that had previously been reserved for elites.¹⁵³

One could argue that orchestras no longer resonate with prevailing cultural practices and norms, but some ensembles are tackling this problem head on. The Memphis Symphony Orchestra responded to a despondent audience base by articulating a new mission of public citizenship, “building artistically engaging community partnerships that use musicians' artistic talents and leadership to serve community needs.”¹⁵⁴ Invoking a system of “service exchange,” Memphis has redefined the role of the orchestral musician by providing compensation for activities outside of the concert hall (e.g., teaching, mentoring, producing a local radio show). This model can help orchestras balance their budgets and build community support, all while supplying musicians with additional paid work. It also addresses an oversupply of traditional concerts, foreshadowing a shift in the way orchestras identify themselves—from purveyors of elite art to public educational institutions.

Indeed, the simple notion that pops concerts represent the best (or easiest) way to reach one's community is now viewed as outdated or even condescending. Orchestras are

¹⁵³ John Spitzer, “The Entrepreneur-conductors and their Orchestras,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 5, no. 1 (2008): 21.

¹⁵⁴ Tepavac, *Fearless Journeys: Innovation in Five American Orchestras*, 9.

instead beginning to take classical music “from the stage to the streets,” meeting audiences half way to engage them on their own turf. In Chicago, the CSO has teamed up with superstar cellist Yo Yo Ma to orchestrate a “citizen musician movement” in the city’s most underserved neighborhoods.¹⁵⁵ Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony, an elite training orchestra based out of Miami, Florida, have begun curating a series of concurrent mini-concerts that encourages listeners to move freely and informally between performance spaces.¹⁵⁶ And in Baltimore, Marin Alsop has implemented a “Rusty Musicians” program that invites amateur instrumentalists to sit and play with members of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Thus while arts organizations have traditionally viewed audiences as passive consumers, these programs suggest a shift toward a more participatory framework, in which community members interact with both the music and the musicians.

The geographic location of these interactions is an important factor for orchestras to consider. After all, “community” is often situated in some physical or virtual meeting space, where people can come together and experience something collectively. The Brooklyn Philharmonic has recently been termed a “site-specific” orchestra, due to its interconnectedness with the Brooklyn community and various local artists (including rapper Mos Def and indie rock musician Sufjan Stevens).¹⁵⁷ Such musical border-crossing suggests a rethinking of traditional programming strategies, extending the

¹⁵⁵ Mark Caro, “From the Stage to the Streets,” *Chicago Tribune*, 30 January 2011. Despite the relatively high profile of this initiative, thanks in part to Ma’s involvement, only a handful of the orchestra’s musicians have expressed interest in participating.

¹⁵⁶ Rebecca Winzenried, “Bridging the Gap,” *Symphony Magazine* 62 (Summer 2011): 34–41.

¹⁵⁷ See Katherine Gressel, “The New Brooklyn Philharmonic: A ‘Site-Specific’ Orchestra?,” Createquity blog, posted 28 September 2011 <createquity.com>.

orchestra's reach to a broader audience with diverse musical tastes and experiences.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, in an increasingly globalized world, locality need not be confined to a metropolitan area or neighborhood. Some of the country's largest orchestras have taken considerable steps to redefine community and build an explicitly global brand. Since 2005, the Cleveland Orchestra has invested heavily in extended residencies domestically (Florida) and abroad (Paris), while the New York Philharmonic's recent tours to North Korea and Vietnam highlight its role as a cultural diplomat.¹⁵⁹

Yet, with an art form that privileges the live concert experience, how can orchestras build meaningful relationships with global audiences, or reach a generation of young people who depend on and expect digital channels of entertainment and communication? Orchestras have until recently ignored many of the technological advancements attained during the digital age, fearing its potentially disruptive effects. Few would disagree that digital technologies represent a tremendous opportunity for arts organizations, both in terms of capturing and distributing content and reaching new audiences. But they also threaten at least two core values held by most orchestras: audio fidelity, and the sanctity of the live concert experience. Many feel that, with the advent of digital technology, the beauty and uniqueness of the live acoustic event is diluted or, worse yet, lost altogether. And, with an overabundance of freely available artistic content, few organizations have discovered how to effectively monetize the virtual experience.

¹⁵⁸ For more on musical border-crossing, see Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁹ For more on how musical institutions negotiate cultural diplomacy, see Emily Abrams Ansari, "A Serious and Delicate Mission: American Orchestras, American Composers, and Cold War Diplomacy in Europe," in Carol Oja, Anne Schreffler, Felix Rathert, and Wolfgang Meyer (eds.), *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, forthcoming).

It should thus come as no surprise that most orchestras use technology in a relatively perfunctory manner. For them, technology is too expensive, too unfamiliar, and too destructive to provide real value.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, some performing arts organizations are beginning to incorporate technology into their day-to-day operations and strategic planning, most often through the live broadcasting of concert events. Although I will not review fully how arts organizations have exploited technology to reach new audiences, two examples from outside the U.S. orchestra industry may prove instructive. Since its inception in December 2006, the Metropolitan Opera's *Met: Live in HD* project has broadcasted more than fifty live productions in movie theaters and other venues across the world. Conceived as both an audience development tool and a revenue generator, the Emmy-award winning series has sold more than five million tickets in forty-six countries, and in 2010 the project posted its first profit. Yet it remains unclear what effect the project has had on other opera companies or the industry in general. Potential ticket buyers based in smaller rural markets may no longer attend live performances produced by regional opera companies, choosing instead to patronize the Met in HD programs. Alternatively, first-time opera goers may be inspired to attend or support future performances by their local company.

The Berlin Philharmonic faces a similar paradox with its web-driven Digital Concert Hall (DCH). The DCH—a virtual concert venue that broadcasts live performances and archives concerts for future viewing—draws on cutting edge technologies to sell affordable online subscriptions to fans from around the world.¹⁶¹ The project is handsomely funded by Deutsche Bank, which provides research and

¹⁶⁰ This statement is meant to be provocative and evoke the current status quo, and does not reflect some orchestras' innovative use of technology.

¹⁶¹ For more information, see the project's website at <http://dch.berliner-philharmoniker.de/>.

development support so that the orchestra can transform the DCH into a self-sustaining and revenue-generating audience development tool. Yet despite these obvious advantages, critics point out that the initiative's success undermines the very essence of orchestral performance, enabling audience members to become complacent with the virtual concert experience and thus losing something ineffable along the way. Likewise, orchestras with inferior artistic and financial resources may be harmed by the project's success, unable to compete with the Berlin Philharmonic's sterling reputation. Nevertheless, the intrepid rise of technology directs our critical gaze toward the future, repositioning the orchestra as a powerful metaphor for cultural legitimacy.¹⁶² The broader implications of these technologies are contested and complex, but orchestras must learn to navigate them if they wish to compete with other entertainment and media outlets in the twenty-first century.

As argued throughout this dissertation, each of these structural and technological challenges carries important artistic consequences. Similarly, orchestras can use various programming and artistic strategies to combat the organizational challenges they face. Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, ensembles dedicated to "serious" symphonic music have experimented with more popular repertoire in an attempt to build demand. The pops tradition has since evolved to include mixed genre and cross-over concerts featuring popular artists, heavy metal bands, and movie or video-game music.¹⁶³

Alternatively, some orchestras have tried to differentiate themselves by focusing on a

¹⁶² For a fascinating discussion of how technology and access strengthen the orchestra's metaphorical power, see Sarah Carsman, "The YouTube Symphony: Orchestrating An Image of Inclusion On and Offline," paper read at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in San Francisco, 11 November 2011.

¹⁶³ Some of these partnerships have been artistically and financially successful, while others have not. Recent examples include Sting's extended tour with orchestra, a live concert and DVD project with Michael Kamen, Metallica, and the San Francisco Symphony (1999), and the travelling Lord of the Rings Symphony.

historical or stylistic niche within the classical music tradition. In chapter 3, I explored how the Louisville Orchestra invested in an expansive new music project to gain international acclaim, and today a handful of ensembles support similar initiatives, albeit on a more modest scale. Still other orchestras have aligned themselves with the historically-informed performance movement, or integrated their concert programming with themed educational events produced in partnership with universities or other cultural institutions.¹⁶⁴ Each of these strategies adds artistic value, but none has solved the organizational problems associated with symphony orchestras.

One recent attempt to bring together innovative programming and an alternative business model explicitly addresses some of these issues. Launched in 2011 and scheduled to run through at least 2014, New York's "Spring for Music!" festival was conceived as a means of providing affordable and interesting performances by a set of forward-thinking orchestras.¹⁶⁵ Each year, six or seven North American orchestras are chosen to perform at Carnegie Hall. The competitive application process is based primarily on the merit and inventiveness of the proposed programming philosophy, and thus orchestras of varying size and reputation are invited to perform.¹⁶⁶ Tickets are priced at \$15 and \$25 each, and participating orchestras receives a share of the net proceeds for the entire festival, with a guaranteed share of at least \$50,000. The simplicity of this model supports the festival's mission: to foster artistic expression beyond the limitations

¹⁶⁴ Joseph Horowitz is one of foremost proponents of the "themed festival" model, which brings together concerts, educational events, and other cultural enrichment activities. He has produced programs of this type (including "Dvorak in America") for the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, and Post-Classical Ensemble, among others.

¹⁶⁵ For more about the festival, see www.springformusic.com.

¹⁶⁶ In 2011, the orchestras invited to perform included the Albany Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Orchestra Symphonique de Montreal, Oregon Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Toledo Symphony.

of the orchestra's current financial model, and attract and excite new audiences for classical music through unique content and an accessible pricing structure. Bridging structural limitations with a compelling artistic message can help to isolate and perhaps even transcend the challenges facing orchestras today.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Research

It is neither fair nor accurate to characterize orchestras simply as “permanently failing” organizations held together by a distinguished but increasingly irrelevant cultural past. Given the strains of evidence introduced above, it appears as though orchestras are working hard to reinvigorate themselves and tackle the challenges they face. The strategies being employed for this transformative work are diverse, but they are loosely connected through a common goal. To ensure survival, orchestras must contemplate their histories and examine the embedded structures they occupy. Indeed, organizational structure has been a defining influence in the context of musical performance and identity in the last century. However it has not been the only constraint facing orchestras, but one of many. In Chapter 2, I argued that the New York Philharmonic's reorganization efforts were part of broader class warfare being waged inside cultural institutions across the city. The Louisville Orchestra's New Music Project can be understood in part as a political statement, responding to Cold War rhetoric with evidence of home-grown cultural innovations. And, while El Sistema presents American orchestras with new opportunities to redefine themselves, its history reflects the interconnected and mutually contingent nature of music education, orchestral culture, and community in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This dissertation provides a rich and varied perspective on the history of the American orchestra, but it does not offer a catch-all solution to the problems outlined in my introduction. Thus the question remains: are orchestras destined to grow increasingly ossified, marginalized, and irrelevant, or will changes to their organizational structure allow them the flexibility and resources necessary to become dynamic, self-sustaining institutions? As discussed throughout the dissertation, the rift between popular and urban elite culture is central to the very formation of the American orchestra, and has plagued its viability ever since. Orchestral historian Philip Hart goes so far as to argue that great art is inherently aristocratic, suggesting that self-induced elitism may represent the orchestra's surest chance for survival.¹⁶⁷ I disagree. While the hierarchies embedded in the orchestra's ensemble, administrative, and patron structures make organizational change all the more complex, it is inevitable. In the face of declining demand and rising costs, orchestras are experimenting with their marketing and programming tactics to attract and engage new audiences without repelling their traditional patrons. Yet significant changes are necessary if orchestras wish to break through the structural shackles that currently constrain them.

Recent research from within the arts sector has proposed how arts nonprofits can facilitate new engagement strategies to alter their fate. Many of these insights come from consultants, whose interest in applied research resonates with the practical dilemmas facing orchestras today. In a 2010 study commissioned by the Met Life Foundation and published by the League of American Orchestras, Lela Tepavac found that orchestras with committed and unified leadership, an open artistic decision-making model, and a

¹⁶⁷ Philip Hart, *Orpheus in the New World: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution—its Past, Present, and Future* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973).

propensity for collaboration were more likely to succeed in difficult economic environments.¹⁶⁸ Other work exploring civic engagement in the arts has called for the development of “learning institutions” based on the principles of participatory evaluation and collaborative inquiry.¹⁶⁹ From this perspective, arts organizations need to rely on data that is collected and valued by multiple constituent groups, minimizing power dynamics within and between institutions to construct an inclusive theory of change.

A second study commissioned by the League of American Orchestras posits an integrated approach to audience engagement, defining it not as a distinct strategy but a fundamental characteristic shared by successful arts organizations.¹⁷⁰ The authors conclude that orchestras can engage audiences better by exploring non-traditional performance spaces, soliciting substantive feedback, and encouraging listeners to participate actively in the design and interpretation of their own experiences. Another recent research report published by the Wallace Foundation reached similar conclusions.¹⁷¹ They argue that the challenges arts organizations face stem not only from the recent economic downturn, but from longer-term seismic shifts. Technological innovations have made it possible to gather and interact more spontaneously, without the assistance or authority of traditional institutions. Moreover, a vast array of entertainment alternatives exists, empowering discerning consumers to pick and choose how they spend their leisure dollars. Yet the participatory process is not a zero-sum game; it is dynamic

¹⁶⁸ Tepavac, *Fearless Journeys: Innovation in Five American Orchestras*.

¹⁶⁹ See for example Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, “Civic Engagement and the Arts: Issues of Conceptualization and Measurement,” for *Animating Democracy*, a Program of Americans for the Arts. Philadelphia (January 2009).

¹⁷⁰ Alan S. Brown and Kelly Dylla, *Audience and Community Engagement in Practice: Case Studies* (ASOL Orchestra Leadership Academy, 19-20 June 2007).

¹⁷¹ The Wallace Foundation, “Engaging Audiences: Report on The Wallace Foundation Arts Grantee Conference” (Philadelphia, PA, 1-3 April 2009).

and always evolving. Providing and maintaining access to artists and their performances is critical for twenty-first century arts institutions, who must reconcile accessibility with a decidedly exclusive past.

These engagement techniques represent opportunities for change that resonate not just with orchestras, but with other nonprofits as well. Indeed, the lessons learned throughout this dissertation can be extended to a number of organizational contexts, including those in the performing arts (e.g. opera and theater companies) and other nonprofits (e.g. museums and universities). These organizations rely on similar structures and strategies, and face similar challenges, as the symphony orchestra, and thus the analytical framework proposed above might yield new insights that expand or nuance my findings. More work also needs to be done to trace how orchestras and their audiences have variably defined “success” and “excellence” since the adoption of the corporate operating model. Understanding how people measure and perceive value is a crucial step in determining what conditions breed success. Other directions for future research include a more comprehensive analysis of how organizational structure impacts musical composition processes. It seems plausible that the stylistic and technical attributes made available to composers during a certain period are contingent on the broader organizational framework. The limited scope of this dissertation also invites future comparative study of how these issues play out in various European countries, where orchestras face similar structural challenges in an altogether different context.

It is clear that change is an inevitable and continuous process that has impacted orchestras from the very beginning. While much of my dissertation details the industry’s failure to change in concert with its environment, the story of the symphony orchestra in

America is not simply one of economic turmoil and cultural irrelevance. Orchestras are playing more music at a higher level than ever before, and have the potential to reach new audiences through technological and programming innovations. With thousands of conservatory graduates looking for work each year, the artistic quality of small regional ensembles has soared, and in 2007 there were at least 2000 orchestras operating around the country, encompassing 3,500 conductors, 8,000 staff members, 75,000 board members, and over 400,000 volunteers.¹⁷² Although significant structural alterations may be necessary for some orchestras to survive, this does not mean that the current nonprofit model will disappear. By looking beyond their collective past and exploiting opportunities for change and innovation, orchestras might avoid continued crisis and chart a sustainable course for the future.

¹⁷² According to the League of American Orchestras, the total number of orchestras operating in America includes 400 professional, 900 volunteer, 200 college, and 500 youth ensembles. It is likely that this number is actually quite low, as it precludes ensembles that did not respond to the League's annual survey (League of American Orchestras "Quick Facts: 2006-7" <www.americanorchestras.org>).

Appendix

Figure 6.1 List of Louisville Orchestra Commissions, 1948-58
(University of Louisville Archives)

WORKS COMMISSIONED BY THE LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA
FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION SERIES WITH ITS OWN PRIZES

<u>Date of Premiere</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title of Work</u>
November 9, 1948	Joaquin Rodrigo	"Castro Madrigales Anatorica"
December 7, 1948	Virgil Thomson	"Wheat Field at Noon"
January 4, 1949	Darius Milhaud	"Kentuckians" (Divertissement sur Vingt-Airs du Kentucky)
February 8, 1949	Claude Alkan	"John Gilbert's Steamboat Overture"
March 8, 1949	Gian-Francesco Malipiero	"Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra"
April 5, 1949	Fay Harriss	"Kentucky Spring"
November 2, 1949	Claude Alkan	"Concerto for Piano & Orchestra"
November 30, 1949	Robert Russell Bennett	"Concert Variations on A Crooner's Theme for Violin and Orchestra"
January 4, 1950	William Schuman	"Judith: A Choreographic Poem"
February 1, 1950	David Diamond	"Iliad of Athens - A Symphonic Portrait after Shakespeare"
March 1, 1950	Paul Hindemith	"Sinfonietta in E"
November 15, 1950	Vincent Persichetti	"Serenade No. 5 for Orchestra"
December 6, 1950	George Faria	"Second Symphony"
December 29, 1950	Bohuslav Martinu	"Intermezzo"
January 31, 1951	Paul Nordoff	"Lost Summer" for Mezzo Soprano and Orchestra
February 28, 1951	Arthur Honegger	"Suite Archaique"
November 9, 1951	Reitor Villa-Lobos	"Erosion: The Origin of the Amazon River-Symphonic Poem"
December 5, 1951	Norasa Dello Jajo	"The Triumph of St. Juan"
January 9, 1952	Carl Bricken	"Daniel Boone: Legend for Orchestra"
February 6, 1952	Virgil Thomson	"Five Songs after William Blake"
March 5, 1952	Otto Luening	"Louisville Concerto"
November 12, 1952	Tom Scott	"Fenland and Castles"

<u>Date of Premiere</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title of Work</u>
February 11, 1953	Carlos Chavez	"Symphony No. 4"
March 11, 1953	Lukas Foss	"A Parable of Death"
October 28, 1953	Bernard Rogers	"Dance Scenes"
November 18, 1953	Peter Mannin	"Symphony No. 6"
December 9, 1953	Roy Harris	"Second Piano Concerto"
February 17, 1954	Jacques Ibert	"Louisville Concerto"
March 17, 1954	Quincy Porter	"Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra"
October 20, 1954	Albert Ginastera	"Pampeana No. 3: A Pastoral Symphony"
November 17, 1954	Gian-Francesco Malipiero	"Fantasia di Ogni Giorno"
January 12, 1955	Robert Muczynski	"Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra"
February 9, 1955	Chou Wen-chung	"And the Fallen Petals"
March 16, 1955	Alexandre Tansman	"Capriccio"
October 19, 1955	Harold Shapero	"Credo for Orchestra"
November 16, 1955	Irving Fine	"Serious Song: A Lament for String Orchestra"
January 18, 1956	Lou Harrison	"Four Strict Songs" for Eight Baritones and Orchestra
February 15, 1956	Nicolas Nabokov	"Symboli Christiani" for Baritone and Orchestra
March 14, 1956	Carlos Surinach	"Feria Magica (The Magic Fair) Overture"
October 24, 1956	Walter Piston	"Serenata"
November 28, 1956	Roger Goeb	"Concertino for Orchestra II"
January 9, 1957	Howard Swanson	"Concerto for Orchestra"
January 30, 1957	Alfonso Letellier	"Aculeo", Suite for Orchestra
February 20, 1957	David Van Vactor	"Fantasia, Chaconne and Allegro"
March 13, 1957	Niels Viggo Bentzon	"Pezzi Sinfonici"
October 23, 1957	Sir Arthur Bliss	Discourse for Orchestra
November 20, 1957	Halsey Stevens	"Sinfonia Breve"
January 15, 1958	Collin McFhee	"Symphony No. 2 (Pastoral)"

<u>Date of Premiere</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title of Work</u>
February 5, 1958	Herbert Elwell	Concert Suite for Violin & Orchestra
March 5, 1958	Aaron Copland	"Orchestral Variations"
March 26, 1958	Henry Cowell	"Ongaku for Orchestra"
October 28, 1958	Paul Ben Haim	"To the Chief Musician" Metamorphoses for Orchestra
December 3, 1958	Benjamin Lees	Symphony No. 2
January 14, 1959	Nikolai Lopatnikoff	Music for Orchestra, Op. 39
February 4, 1959	Bohuslav Martinu	Estampes
March 4, 1959	Klaus Egge	Symphony No. 3 (Louisville Symphony)
April 1, 1959	Wallingford Riegger	Variations for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 71

WORKS COMMISSIONED BY THE LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA
(with Funds from Rockefeller Foundation)

<u>Date of Premiere</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title of Work</u>
January 2, 1954	Ernst Toch	"Natturmo"
January 9, 1954	Carlos Surinach	"Sinfonietta Flamenca"
January 16, 1954	George Perle	"Rhapsody for Orchestra"
January 23, 1954	Heitor Villa-Lobos	"Dawn in a Tropical Forest"
February 6, 1954	Robert L. Sanders	"Little Symphony No. 2 in Eb"
February 13, 1954	Wallingford Riegger	"Variations for Piano & Orchestra"
February 20, 1954	Alan Hovhaness	"Concerto No. 7 for Orchestra"
February 27, 1954	Halsey Stevens	"Triskelion"
March 6, 1954	Bernard Wagenaar	"Concert Overture"
March 13, 1954	Gardner Read	"Toccata Biocosa"
March 20, 1954	Otto Luening- Vladimir Ussachevsky	"Rhapsodic Variations for Tape Recorder & Orchestra"
April 3, 1954	Peggy Glanville-Hicks	Opera, "The Transposed Heads"
May 1, 1954	Alexander Tcherepnin	"Suite for Orchestra, Op. 87"
May 8, 1954	Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco	"Overture, Much Ado About Nothing"
May 15, 1954	Paul Creston	"Invocation and Dance"
May 22, 1954	Darius Milhaud	"Ouverture Mediterraneenne"
May 29, 1954	Henry Cowell	"Symphony No. 11"
June 5, 1954	Karel Husa	"Prelude for Orchestra"
June 12, 1954	Jose Pablo Moncayo	"Cumbres"
June 19, 1954	Robert Ward	"Euphony for Orchestra"
June 26, 1954	Ernst Bacon	"The Enchanted Island"
August 28, 1954	Vincent Persichetti	"Symphony for Strings"
September 4, 1954	Toris Klacher	"Study in Pianissimo, Op. 45"
September 18, 1954	Ulysses Kay	"Bersade for Orchestra"
September 25, 1954	Henri Sauguet	"Les Trois Lys"
October 2, 1954	Luigi Dallapiccola	"Variations for Orchestra"

<u>Date of Premiere</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title of Work</u>
October 16, 1954	Vittorio Rieti	"Introduzioni e Gioco Delle Ore"
October 30, 1954	William Bergson	"A Carol on Twelfth Night"
November 6, 1954	Gottfried von Einem	"Meditations"
November 27, 1954	Felix Borowski	"The Mirror"
December 4, 1954	Richard Mohaupt	Opera, "Double Trouble"
January 1, 1955	Ben Weber	"Prelude & Passacaglia, Op. 42"
January 8, 1955	Leo Sowerby	"All on a Summer's Day"
January 15, 1955	Camargo Guarnieri	"Suite IV Centenario"
January 29, 1955	Ingolf Dahl	"The Tower of St. Barbara"
February 5, 1955	John Vincent	"Symphony in D"
February 12, 1955	Ernst Krenek	"Eleven Transparencies"
February 26, 1955	Henk Badings	"The Louisville Symphony"
March 12, 1955	Hilding Rosenberg	"The Louisville Concerto"
March 26, 1955	Roberto Caetano	"Magnificat, Op. 20"
April 2, 1955	George Antheil	Opera, "The Wish"
April 23, 1955	Paul Mueller	"Concerto for Cello & Orchestra, Op. 55"
May 3, 1955	Juan Orrego-Salas	"Beremata Concertante, Op. 42"
May 14, 1955	Paul Nordoff	"Winter Symphony"
May 21, 1955	Harold Morris	"Passacaglia, Adagio, and Finale"
May 28, 1955	Ned Rorem	"Design for Orchestra"
June 11, 1955	Bernard Reichel	"Suite Symphonique"
September 24, 1955	Andre Jolivet	"Suite Transocéane"
October 1, 1955	Peter Jona Korn	"Variations on a Tune from the 'Beggars Opera' "
October 8, 1955	Edmund Rubbra	"Improvisation for Violin & Orchestra"
October 29, 1955	Alexei Haieff	"Ballet in E"
December 1955	Rolf Liebermann	Opera, "School for Wives"

<u>Date of Premiere</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title of Work</u>
January 14, 1956	Roger Sessions	"Idyll of Theocritus" for Soprano & Orchestra
January 28, 1956	Meyer Kupferman	"Fourth Symphony"
February 25, 1956	Everett Helm	"Second Piano Concerto"
April 7, 1956	Gail Kubik	"Symphony No. 2 in F"
April 21, 1956	Elliot Carter	"Variations for Orchestra"
November 17, 1956	Arthur Berger	"Polyphony for Orchestra"
April 16, 1958	Nicolas Nabokov	Opera, "The Holy Devil"

Figure 6.2: First Edition Recordings by the Louisville Orchestra, 1954–87

Record No.	Composer First Name	Last Name	Title
L5452	Henry	Cowell	Symphony No. 11
L5452	Alexander	Tcherepnin	Suite, Op. 87
L5452	Bernard	Wagenaar	A Concert Overture
L5454	Alan	Hovhanness	Concerto No. 7 for Orchestra
L5454	Mario	Castelnuovo-Tedesco	Overture to "Much Ado About Nothing"
L5454	Carlos	Surinach	Sinfonietta Flamenca
L5455	Jacques	Ibert	Louisville Concerto
L5455	Gardner	Read	Toccata Giocoso
L5455	Otto Luening-Vladimir	Ussachevsky	Rhapsodic Variations for Tape and Orchestra
L5459	Gottfried	Von Einem	Meditations
L5459	Karol	Rathaus	Prelude for Orchestra, Opus 71
L5459	George	Perle	Rhapsody for Orchestra
L565	Juan	Orrego-Salas	Serenata Concertante, Op. 42
L565	Harold	Shapero	Credo for Orchestra
L565	Robert	Muczynski	Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra
L566	Henk	Badings	The Louisville Symphony
L566	Ben	Weber	Prelude and Passacaglia
L566	Leo	Sowerby	All on a Summers Day
L571	Paul	Nordoff	Winter Symphony
L571	Paul	Muller-Zurich	Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 55
L572	Andre	Jolivet	Suite Transoceane
L572	John	Vincent	Symphony in D
L582	Lou	Harrison	"Four Strict Songs" for Eight Baritones and Orchestra
L582	Peter Jona	Korn	Variations on a Tune from "The Beggar's Opera"
L583	Elliott	Carter	Variations for Orchestra
L583	Everett	Helm	Second Piano Concerto
L585	Roger	Goeb	Concertino for Orchestra II.
L585	Gail	Kubik	Symphony No. 2 in F.
L586	Walter	Piston	Serenata
L586	David	Van Vactor	Fantasia, Chaconne and Allegro

L586	Niels Viggo	Bentzon	Pezzi Sinfonici, Opus 109
L591	Aaron	Copland	Orchestral Variations
L591	Alfonso	Letelier	Aculeo, Suite for Orchestra
L592	Sir Arthur	Bliss	Discourse for Orchestra
L592	Colin	McPhee	Symphony No. 2, Pastoral
L593	Herbert	Elwell	Concert Suite for Violin and Orchestra
L593	Halsey	Stevens	Sinfonia Breve
L595	Henry	Cowell	Ongaku for Orchestra
L595	Benjamin	Lees	Symphony No. 2
L596	Bohuslav	Martinu	Estampes
L596	Nikolai	Lopatnikoff	Music for Orchestra, Op. 39
L601	Paul	Ben-Haim	"To the Chief Musician"
L601	Wallingford	Riegger	Variation for Violin-Orchestra
L605	Paul	Hindemith	Sinfonietta in E
L605	Claude	Almand	John Gilbert: A Steamboat Overture
L605	David	Diamond	Overture: "Timon of Athens"
L606	Bernard	Rogers	Dance Scenes
L606	Joaquin	Rodrigo	Cuatro Madrigales Amatorios: for Soprano and Orchestra
L606	Vincent	Persichetti	Serenade No. 5
L612	Ernst	Toch	Peter Pan
L612	Roberto	Garcia-Morillo	Variaciones Olimpicas, Opus 24
L613	Peter	Mennin	Symphony No. 5
L613	Joaquin	Rodrigo	Concerto Galante for Violincello and Orchestra
L615	Alexander	Tcherepnin	Piano Concerto No. 2
L615	Arthur	Honegger	Suite Archaïque
L616	Robert	Kurka	Symphony No. 2
L616	Robert	Whitney	Concertino
L621	Charles	Ives	Decoration Day
L621	Lou	Harrison	Suite for Symphonic Strings
L622	Henry	Cowell	Thesis (Symphony No. 15)
L622`	Rodolfo	Halffter	Ballet Suite, "La Madrugada Del Panadero" (Early Awakening of the Baker)
L623	Harald	Saeverud	Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 28
L623	George	Rochberg	Night Music
L624	Juan	Orrego-Salas	Symphony No. 2 (To the Memory of a Wanderer), Op. 39

L624	Andrzej	Panufnik	Sinfonia Elegiaca
L625	Ross Lee	Finney	Symphony No. 2
L625	Iain	Hamilton	Scottish Dances, Op. 32
L626	Benjamin	Britten	Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 15
L626	Paul	Ben-Haim	Pastorale Variee for Clarinet, Harp and Strings, Op. 31
L631	Zoltan	Kodaly	Symphony (1961)
L631	Nelson	Keyes	Suite, "Music for Monday Evenings"
L632	Hale	Smith	Contours for Orchestra
L632	Garner	Read	Night Flight, Op. 44
L632	Robert	Kurka	Serenade for Small Orchestra, Op. 25
L633	Walter	Piston	Concerto for Viola and Orchestra
L633`	Hall	Overton	Symphony No. 2 in One Movement
L634	George	Rochberg	Symphony No. 1
L634	Ray	Luke	Symphony No. 2
LS636	Frank	Martin	Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
LS636	Ernest	Bloch	Proclamation for Trumpet and Orchestra
LS636	Toshiro	Mayuzumi	Pieces for Prepared Piano and Strings
L641	Chou	Wen-Chung	Soliloquy of a Bhiksuni
L641	Luigi	Dallapiccola	Due Pezzi
L641	Jose	Serebrier	Partita
L642	Quincy	Porter	Symphony No. 2
L642	Vittorio	Giannini	Divertimento No. 2
L644	Ned	Rorem	Eleven Studies for Eleven Players
L644	William	Sydeman	Orchestral Abstractions
LS645	Alexander	Tcherepnin	Symphony No. 2
LS645	Richard	Mohaupt	Town Piper Music
L646	Wallingford	Riegger	Symphony No. 4
L646	Roberto	Gerhard	Alegrias, Ballet Suite
L651	Alvin	Etler	Concerto for Wind Quintet and Orchestra
L651	Ives	Schuman	Variations on "America"
L651	Ulysses	Kay	Umbrian Scene
L652	Ross Lee	Finney	Symphony No. 1 (Communique 1943
L652	Daniel	Pinkham	Symphony No. 2
LS653	Walter	Piston	Symphony No. 5

LS653	William	Kraft	Concerto Grosso
LS654	Nikolai	Lopatnikoff	Variazioni Concertani
LS654	Andrzej	Panufnik	Nocturne
L655	Roy	Harris	Symphony No. 5
L655	Paul	Creston	Corinthians XIII
LS656	Robert	Kurka	Suite from "The Good Soldier Schweik"
LS656	Carlos	Surinach	Symphonic Variations
LS661	Ernst	Toch	Jephta. Rhapsodic Poem (Symphony No. 5)
LS661	Harry	Somers	Passacaglia and Fugue
LS661	Francois	Morel	Antiphonie
L662	Alan	Hovhaness	The Silver Pilgrimage (Symphony No. 15)
L662	Lennox	Berkeley	Four Rosard Sonnets for Tenor and Orchestra
LS663	Bohuslav	Martinu	Symphony No. 5
LS663	Virgil	Thomson	Concerto for Flute
L664	G. F.	Malipiero	Notturmo di Canti e Balli
L664	Irwin	Baselon	Short Symphony (Testament to a Big City)
L665	Benjamin	Lees	Concerto for Orchestra
L665	Ronald	Herder	Movements for Orchestra
L665	Luigi	Nono	Due Expressioni (Part 1)
L666	Roy	Harris	Epilogue to "Profiles in Courage" -J.F.K.
L666	Gunther	Schuller	Dramatic Overture
L666	Toshiro	Mayuzumi	Samsara. Symphonic Poem
LS671	Boris	Blacher	Orcherstal Fantasy
LS671	Andrzej	Panufnik	Rapsody for Orchestra
L672	Ross Lee	Finney	Symphony No. 3
L672	Silvestre	Revueltas	Ventanas
L672	Lothar	Klein	Musique A Go-Go
LS673	Daniel	Pinkham	Signs of the Zodiac
LS673	Robert	Rohe	Mainescape
LS674	Alvin	Etler	Triptych
LS674	Harold	Shapero	Partita in C for Piano and Small Orchestra
LS675	Peter Racine	Fricker	Symphony No. 1
LS676	Goffredo	Petrassi	Concerto No. 5 for Orchestra
Ls676	Ben	Weber	Dolmen. An Elegy

LS676	Irwin	Fischer	Overture on an Exuberant Tone Row
L681	Henry	Cowell	Sinfonietta
L681	Carlos	Surinach	Melorhythmic Dramas
L682	Robert	Starer	Mutabili
L682	Charles	Koechlin	Cinq Chorals dans Les Modes du Moyen-Age
L682	Henry	Cowell	Ballad Hymns and Fuguing Tunes Nos. 2 and 3
L683	Dmitri	Shostakovich	Suite from "Hamlet," Op. 32
L683	Leon	Kirchner	Toccata for Strings, Solo Winds, and Percussion
LS684	Paul	Hindemith	Kammermusik No. 2, Op. 36, No. 1
LS684	Goffredo	Petrassi	"Noche Oscura," Cantata for Mixed Chorus and Orchestra
LS685	Boris	Blacher	Orchestra Ornament
LS685	Francis	Poulenc	Deux Marches et un Intermede
LS685	Darius	Milhaud	Cortege Funebre
L686	Leonardo	Balada	Guernica
L686	Gunther	Schuller	Five Bagatelles for Orchestra
L686	Luigi	Dallapiccola	Piccola Musica Notturna
LS691	Peter	Schickele	Three Views from "The Open Window."
LS691	Robert	Dennis	Three Views from "The Open Window."
LS691	Stanley	Walden	Three Views from "The Open Window."
L692	William	Schuman	Symphony No. 4
L692	Robert	Bernat	In Memoriam: John F. Kennedy
L693	Peter	Mennin	Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
L693	Arthur	Honegger	Prelude to "Aglavaine et Selysette."
L694	Paul	Hindemith	Concert Music for Solo Viola and Large Chamber Orchestra, Op. 48
L694	Easley	Blackwood	Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 21
L695	Heitor	Villa-Lobos	Danses Africaines
L695	John	Addison	Concerto for Trumpet, Strings and Percussion
L696	Silvestre	Revueltas	"Redes" (complete)
L696	Alberto	Ginastera	"Ollantay" A Symphonic Triptych
LS701	Antonio	Tauriello	"Illinx," for Clarinet Solo and Orchestra
LS701	Marcel	Grandjany	Aria in Classic Style for Harp and Strings
LS701	Matyas	Seiber	Concertino for Clarinet and Strings
LS702	Hector	Tosar	Toccata
LS702	Ernst	Toch	Miniature Overture

LS702	Jacques	Ibert	Bacchanale
LS702	Yoav	Talmi	Overture on Mexican Themes
LS702	Camargo	Guarnieri	Three Dances for Orchestra
LS703	Julius	Reitz	Concert Overture, Op. 7
LS703	Max	Bruch	Symphony No. 2 in F Minor, Op. 36
LS704	Richard	Strauss	Six Songs, Op. 68 "Brentano"
LS704	Phillip	Rhodes	"The Lament of Michal," for Soprano and Orchestra
LS705	Joseph	Joachim	Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor ("Hungarian Concerto")
LS706	Vincent	Persichetti	Symphony No. 8
LS706	Wallingford	Riegger	Study in Sonority
LS711	George	Crumb	"Echoes of Time and the River" (Echoes II)
LS711	Merrill	Ellis	"Kaleidoscope," for Orchestra, Synthesizer, and Soprano
LS712	Ezra	Laderman	"Magic Prison"
LS712	Archibald	MacLeish	"Magic Prison"
LS712	Nelson	Keyes	"Abysses, Bridges, Chasms" for Ten Rock-Jazz Soloists and Orchestra
LS713	Carlos	Chavez	Suite from "Horsepower"
LS713	Enrique	Granados	"Dante," Symphonic Poem, Op. 21
LS714	Gustavo	Becerra	Symphony No. 1
LS714	Jesus	Pinzon	Study for Orchestra
LS714	Gerardo	Gandini	Fantasia-Impromptu for Piano and Orchestra
LS714	Hector	Quintanar	Sideral II
LS715	Gyorgy	Rayki	Elegiac Variations and Lamentation for Orchestra
LS715	Wallingford	Riegger	Dichotomy
LS716	Morton	Gould	"Soundings" and "Columbia"
LS716	Carlisle	Floyd	In Celebration: An Overture for Orchestra
LS721	John	Becker	"Symphonia Brevis" (Symphony No. 3)
LS721	William	Schuman	Prayer in Time of War
LS721	Felix	Labunski	Canto di Aspirazione
LS722	Krzysztof	Penderecki	De Natura Sonoris No. 2
LS722	Gene	Gutche	Genghis Khan, Op. 37
LS722	Karel	Husa	Music for Prague 1968
LS723-4	Phillip	Rhodes	From "Paradise Lost". An Opera-Oratorio in Three Acts
LS725	Karl	Husa	Two Sonnets from Michaelangelo
LS725	Mathias	Bamert	Septuria Lunaris

LS726	Leonardo	Balada	"Maria Sabina", Symphonic Tragedy for Narrators, Chorus and Orchestra
LS731	Frank	Martin	Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
LS731	Malcolm	Arnold	Concerto for Two Violins and String Orchestra
LS732	Rod	McKuen	"The City" and "I Hear America Singing"
LS733	Ned	Rorem	Piano Concerto in Six Movements
LS733	Thomas	Briccetti	Overture: The Fountain of Youth
LS733	Paul	Turok	"Lyric Variations" for Oboe and Strings
LS734	Max	Reger	A Comedy Overture, Op. 120
LS734	Georges	Bizet	Chromatic Variations (orch. Felix Weingartner)
LS734	Moritz	Moszkowski	Suite No. 3, Op. 79
LS734	Edward	Napravnik	Festive March
LS735	Lawrence	Widdoes	Morning Music
LS735	Peter	Schulthorpe	Sun Music III
LS735	Alan	Hovhaness	"Avak, The Healer" for Soprano, Trumpet and Strings
LS736	Jaques	Ibert	"Ballad of Reading Gaol"
LS736	Charles	Koechlin	Partita for Chamber Orchestra
LS741	Matthias	Bamert	"Mantrajana"
LS741	Gordon	Crosse	Some Marches on a Ground
LS741	Phillip	Rhodes	"Museum Pieces" for String Quartet and Clarinet
LS742	Norman Dello	Joio	Homage to Haydn
LS742	Dan	Welcher	Concerto for Flute and Orchestra
LS743	Ernest	Guiraud	The Fantastic Hunt
LS743	Moritz	Moskowski	Violin Concerto, C Major, Op. 30
LS744	Darius	Milhaud	Symphony No. 6
LS744	Darius	Milhaud	Chansons de Ronsard
LS745	Samuel	Barber	Die Natali
LS745	Claus	Adam	Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
LS746	Walter	Piston	Symphony No. 7
LS746	Walter	Piston	Symphony No. 8
LS751	David	Baker	Le Chat Qui Peche, for Soprano, Jazz Quartet and Orchestra
LS751	Morton	Gould	Symphonette No. 2
LS752	Benjamin	Lees	Symphony No. 3
LS752	Joaquin	Turina	Danzas Gitanas
LS753	Frederick	Converse	Endymions Narrative, Flivver 10 Million

LS753	George	Chadwick	Overture "Euterpe."
LS754	Arthur	Foote	Francesca da Rimini
LS754	Arthur	Bird	Carnival Scene
LS754	Leo	Ornstein	Nocturne and Dance
LS755	Walter	Piston	Incredible Flutist
LS755	Dudley	Buck	Festival Overture
LS756	Ernst	Krenek	Kleine Blasmusik. Three Merry Marches
LS756	Peter Maxwell	Davies	Saint Michael Sonata
LS757	Stephen Douglas	Burton	Songs of the Tulpehocken
LS758	Edward	Harper	Bartok Games
LS758	Alun	Hoddinott	Investiture Dances
LS758	Anthony	Strilko	The Mediation of Hermes Trismegistis
LS759	Antal	Dorati	Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra
LS759	Gyorgy	Ranki	Suite from "King Pamade's New Clothes"
LS760	Eric	Stokes	The Continental Harp and Band Report
LS761	Joaquin	Nin	Diferencias
LS761	Blas	Galindo	Symphony No. 2
LS762	Heitor	Villa-Lobos	Bachianas Brasileiras No. 4
LS762	Priscilla	McLean	Variations and Mozaics on a Theme of Stravinsky
LS763	Samuel	Barber	Prayers of Kierkegaard, Op. 30, for Mixed Chorus and Orchestra
LS763	Dan E.	Welcher	Dervishes: Ritual DanceScene for Full Orchestra
LS763	Hunter	Johnson	Past the Evening Sun
LS764	Jacob	Druckman	Lamia
LS764	Dominick	Argento	Royal Invitation: Homage to the Queen of Tonga
LS765	Roque	Cordero	Symphony No. 2 in One Movement
LS765	Leonardo	Balada	Homage to Sarasate
LS765	Henry	Brant	On The Nature of Things, after Lucretius
LS766	Roy	Harris	When Johnny Comes Marching Home, An American Overture
LS766	John	Weinzweig	Symphonic Ode
LS766	Walter	Piston	Symphony No. 1
LS767	Gian-Carlo	Menotti	The Telephone
LS767	Ivana	Themmen	Shelter This Candle From The Wind
LS768	Peter	Schickele	Pentangle, Five Songs for French Horn and Orchestra
LS768	Francis	Thorne	Elegy for Orchestra

LS768	Joyce	Mekeel	Vigil
LS769	Jacques	Hetu	Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 15
LS769	Dereck	Healey	Arctic Images
LS770	Peter Maxwell	Davies	St. Thomas Wake, Fox Trot for Orchestra
LS770	George	Antheil	Symphony No. 5
LS771	John	Corigliano	Elegy
LS771	John	Corigliano	Tournaments
LS771	Bohuslav	Martinu	Oboe Concerto
LS772	Donald	Erb	Autumnmusic; Christmasmusic; Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra
LS773	Daniel	Bortz	In Memoria Di
LS773	Gunnar	De Frumerie	Symphonic Varistions
LS773	Lars Erik	Larsson	Divertimento
LS774	George	Crumb	Variazioni
LS774	Sidney	Hodkinson	Fresco
LS775	Karel	Husa	The Trogan Women
LS776	Roger	Sessions	Symphony No. 7; Divertimento
LS777	Toshiro	Mayuzumi	Essay for String Orchestra
LS777	Duke	Ellington	Suite from "The River"
LS778	Thomas	Ludwig	Symphony No. 1
LS778	Stanislaw	Skrowaczewski	Music at Night

Figure 6.2 Income Gap Data (1971 –2009)

Year	Avg. Expenses	Avg. Earned Revenue	Proportion Covered
1971-72	\$2,515,635	\$1,299,620	0.516617032
1972-73	\$2,800,900	\$1,561,565	0.55752261
1973-74	\$2,950,783	\$1,663,911	0.563888059
1974-75	\$3,292,355	\$1,995,609	0.606134338
1975-76	\$3,638,362	\$2,212,131	0.608001896
1976-77	\$3,918,939	\$2,319,821	0.591951274
1977-78	\$4,451,084	\$2,675,593	0.601110313
1978-79	\$5,196,218	\$3,131,729	0.602693857
1979-80	\$5,856,123	\$3,527,006	0.602276746
1980-81	\$6,726,092	\$4,050,783	0.602249095
1981-82	\$7,685,748	\$4,664,884	0.606952581
1982-83	\$8,293,110	\$4,919,285	0.593177383
1983-84	\$9,281,620	\$5,370,453	0.578611636
1984-85	\$10,441,960	\$5,404,348	0.517560692
1985-86	\$11,563,303	\$6,200,434	0.536216498
1986-87	\$12,376,253	\$7,637,960	0.617146418
1987-88	\$13,598,788	\$8,707,971	0.640349066
1988-89	\$14,551,573	\$9,117,857	0.626589091
1989-90	\$15,293,875	\$9,536,637	0.623559238
1990-91	\$16,029,458	\$9,656,497	0.602421901
1991-92	\$16,602,794	\$10,357,780	0.62385766
1992-93	\$17,139,567	\$11,029,589	0.64351618
1993-94	\$17,085,363	\$10,797,529	0.631975362
1994-95	\$17,939,706	\$11,389,247	0.634862523
1995-96	\$19,422,994	\$12,293,299	0.632924994
1996-97	\$20,420,962	\$12,270,001	0.600853224
1997-98	\$21,824,874	\$13,613,417	0.623756981
1998-99	\$22,815,510	\$14,280,466	0.625910414
1999-2000	\$24,347,530	\$15,104,037	0.62035192
2000-01	\$25,115,461	\$16,742,365	0.666615848
2001-02	\$26,005,721	\$11,730,365	0.451068641
2002-03	\$26,203,598	\$16,880,350	0.644199708
2003-04	\$28,226,475	\$19,392,635	0.687037105
2004-05	\$28,497,693	\$20,687,669	0.725941897
2005-06	\$30,148,108	\$20,417,428	0.677237449
2006-07	\$31,272,213	\$25,323,353	0.809771688
2007-08	\$33,371,346	\$12,123,277	0.363284017
2008-09	\$34,576,709	\$4,122,422	0.119225409

Figure 6.3 Income Gap Data (1990–2009), without endowment income

Year	Avg. Expenses	Earned Revenue, less endowment income	Proportion Covered
1990-91	\$16,029,458	\$7,965,528	0.496930578
1991-92	\$16,602,794	\$8,527,083	0.513593279
1992-93	\$17,139,567	\$9,038,996	0.527376009
1993-94	\$17,085,363	\$9,008,576	0.527268652
1994-95	\$17,939,706	\$9,400,855	0.524025012
1995-96	\$19,422,994	\$10,032,922	0.516548674
1996-97	\$20,420,962	\$9,910,287	0.485299725
1997-98	\$21,824,874	\$11,002,845	0.504142423
1998-99	\$22,815,510	\$11,274,507	0.494159758
1999-2000	\$24,347,530	\$11,923,147	0.489706622
2000-01	\$25,115,461	\$11,753,023	0.46795966
2001-02	\$26,005,721	\$11,653,793	0.448124198
2002-03	\$26,203,598	\$11,704,446	0.446673239
2003-04	\$28,226,475	\$12,207,246	0.43247506
2004-05	\$28,497,693	\$12,260,563	0.43023003
2005-06	\$30,148,108	\$13,105,702	0.434710588
2006-07	\$31,272,213	\$13,411,225	0.42885437
2007-08	\$33,371,346	\$13,015,258	0.39001299
2008-09	\$34,576,709	\$14,345,617	0.414892498

Figure 6.4 Income Gap Data (1971–2009), adjusted for inflation

Year	Avg. Expenses	Avg. Earned Revenue	Proportion Covered
1971-72	\$2,515,635	\$1,299,620	0.516617032
1972-73	2637382	1470400	0.557522574
1973-74	2503167	1411506	0.563888067
1974-75	2559967	1551689	0.606136329
1975-76	2673917	1625747	0.608002043
1976-77	2704338	1600836	0.591951154
1977-78	2854605	1715933	0.601110486
1978-79	2988771	1801314	0.602693883
1979-80	2967698	1787375	0.602276579
1980-81	3090272	1861114	0.602249252
1981-82	3325030	2018135	0.606952418
1982-83	3476540	2062204	0.593177124
1983-84	3730519	2158521	0.578611448
1984-85	4051051	2096665	0.517560752
1985-86	4402440	2360661	0.536216507
1986-87	4548214	2806914	0.617146423
1987-88	4800663	3074100	0.640349052

1988-89	4901733	3071373	0.626589208
1989-90	4887836	3047856	0.623559383
1990-91	4916434	2961768	0.602421999
1991-92	4943965	3084330	0.623857572
1992-93	4955150	3188719	0.64351614
1993-94	4814307	3042524	0.631975485
1994-95	4931750	3130983	0.634862473
1995-96	5183996	3281081	0.632925064
1996-97	5359247	3220121	0.600853254
1997-98	5637487	3516422	0.623757004
1998-99	5738437	3591747	0.625910331
1999-2000	5922400	3673973	0.620352053
2000-01	6012988	4008353	0.666615832
2001-02	6080203	2742589	0.451068657
2002-03	6012235	3873080	0.644199703
2003-04	6269477	4307363	0.687037053
2004-05	6121585	4443915	0.725941893
2005-06	6318156	4278892	0.677237472
2006-07	6375229	5162480	0.809771696
2007-08	6554107	2381002	0.363283968
2008-09	6818112	812892	0.119225381

Figure 6.5 Income Gap Data (1990–2009), w/o endowment income & adjusted for inflation

Year	Avg. Expenses	Avg. Earned Revenue, less endowment income	Proportion Covered
1990-91	4916434	2443127	0.496930702
1991-92	4943965	2539187	0.513593239
1992-93	4955150	2613227	0.527375962
1993-94	4814307	2538433	0.527268618
1994-95	4931750	2584360	0.52402494
1995-96	5183996	2677786	0.516548624
1996-97	5359247	2600841	0.485299707
1997-98	5637487	2842097	0.504142537
1998-99	5738437	2835704	0.494159647
1999-2000	5922400	2900239	0.489706707
2000-01	6012988	2813836	0.46795969
2001-02	6080203	2724686	0.448124183
2002-03	6012235	2685504	0.446673159
2003-04	6269477	2711392	0.43247499
2004-05	6121585	2633689	0.430229916
2005-06	6318156	2746569	0.434710539
2006-07	6375229	2734045	0.428854399
2007-08	6554107	2556187	0.39001301
2008-09	6818112	2828784	0.414892568

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