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Summer Celebrations

FAREWELL TO THREE MAESTRI ♦ RICHARD RODGERS CENTENNIAL
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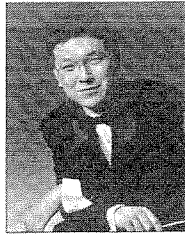
Comment

skills required are remarkably varied and complex, because higher education provides limited opportunities to conduct a professional orchestra, and because the method of preparing concerts in an academic environment bears little resemblance to the professional world.

Rudolf's idea became the basis for what would become the Exxon/Arts Endowment Conductors program. Launched by the now-defunct Affiliate Artists in 1973, the so-called "Exxon program"—funded by the Exxon Corporation and the National Endowment for the Arts—offered grounding in all aspects of the profession through residencies at orchestras across the country. Over the program's seventeen years (for seven of which I directed it), 35 conductors were selected through national auditions and active scouting to fill three-year appointments with major orchestras. They led education, pops, family, and run-out concerts, as well as occasional subscription programs. Host music directors—including David Zinman, Leonard Slatkin, Christoph von Dohnányi, Carlo Maria Giulini, Edo de Waart, and Mstislav Rostropovich—served as mentors. "Exxon conductors" were also introduced to the organizational life of their host orchestras and often received coaching in presentation and communication skills.

It has been nearly ten years since the Exxon program ceased operations, a casualty of Affiliate Artists' demise. What was its impact? One can point to some of its alumni: Hugh Wolff, Myung-Whun Chung, Andrew Litton, Alasdair Neale, and Raymond Harvey. Arguably the program helped identify these and other talented conductors, prepared them for their first professional positions, and distinguished them from an otherwise large and undifferentiated talent pool. The need for such a program in today's environment seems self-evident. It is less clear, however, that the Exxon model is the right model for today.

One effort of the Exxon program that made good sense, but which was not implemented as fully as would have been ideal, was initiating its conductors into operatic as well as orchestral work. The



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ticket-buyers as objects, they're not thinking of them as people. If they put their audience in a subordinate place, even without meaning to, they're not treating their audience decently.

Behind the Mask

How could orchestras do better? Here's my two cents. The first and most basic thing is, as I've already said, to remember that the people in the audience are just that—people. They have thoughts and feelings. They've been around; they know about life. All of this can connect—inevitably does connect—to the music they hear.

So why shouldn't orchestras talk about that? Why shouldn't program notes, just for instance, talk about how the music feels when we hear it? This doesn't have to be a simple discussion; I don't mean that program notes should gush about the wonderful passion of it all. But music does have an emotional impact. It can also make us think. It can change our lives. So instead of talking about what a Beethoven symphony meant when it was first performed—or how it advanced Beethoven's development, or how it brought something new to sonata form—why don't program notes ask what the symphony means today? What do we get from hearing it?

Those comments could come from poets, painters, scholars, and musicians. And they could also come from the audience. As I write, I'm picturing the many concert halls I've sat in. I'm picturing the audiences—or rather, the people in those audiences. I'm imagining their faces—composed, respectful, trained not to show much of what's going on inside. But inside, I imagine, is a whirlwind. Behind those faces lies the response to some of the greatest, most meaningful and provocative art the world has ever known. What is that response? If our art has any meaning, we need to know what it is—and we need to honor it, in all its diversity.

Acknowledging that response in program notes would only be a beginning. Why shouldn't orchestras involve their audience in planning? I'm not talking about popularity polls, or programming only music the audience says it wants to hear. I mean something more meaning-

ful—organically, that would help accomplish all its goals.

Suppose, for instance, the orchestra wanted to commission a new work. What would the audience council think about that? I imagine they'd be interested. If they

composer who was in commission, I imagine I'd like to ask. And their question would be, "Why?" Not "why would you inflict this composer on us?" but "why are you interested in him or her?" Presumably the

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UN RECORD

"If American orchestras are really going to have a media presence, we're going to have to change the way we think. The economics of recording are much different than even fifteen or twenty years ago."

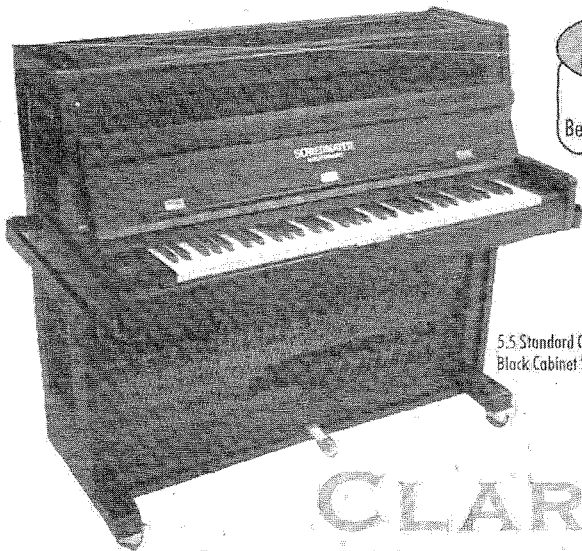
—Larry Ribits, Buffalo Philharmonic

ally and internationally. I have a two-inch-thick file of reviews. One German review of our Ives CD begins: 'It is unlikely that a Middle European music lover would know about the Nashville Symphony. That seems likely to change, however.'

Nashville usually logs two subscription performances of its Naxos repertoire before retiring to the studio. The orchestra must work at peak efficiency. And its repertoire is stretched. Valentine says: "Some people in the industry have an old-fashioned prejudice against Naxos as an 'off-price label.' Personally, I think this is the most important recording project that's happened in my lifetime. And it's been a revelation for our audiences. The Amy Beach Piano Concerto, which we did this season with Alan Feinberg, brought the house down. Even when we did Ives's *Robert Browning* Overture some people loved it and others hated it. The best part is that they were talking about it and about the courage it took for us to do it. We intend to do two Naxos CDs per season. We have donors who believe in what we're doing. We've been successful in obtaining grants for recording American music. And, because our musicians were quick to see the benefits, we now have our EMG."

In an ingenious strategy for defraying media outlays, the Buffalo Philharmonic elected to locally market its first Naxos project, a Frederick Converse CD, before it went on sale commercially under the terms of a six-month "exclusionary clause." The orchestra purchased 2,000 copies at minimal cost and sold them at Naxos's list price. The Philharmonic's more recent Griffes CD includes a late masterpiece of this early-deceased composer, arguably the finest of American Romantics: the searing *Three Poems of Fiona McLeod* for soprano

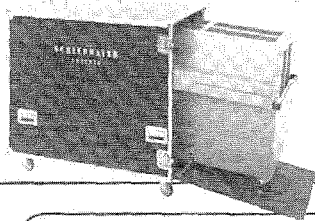
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Surprise

...wrote Hill, "the... me with the... and... the rest of... bitterly... in Germany... will come... can get there... must study to..."

...and agitating for a better... In 1842, a meeting of... by Hill voted to establish... Society of New York... experience is obvious in the... and in the orchestra's... mandated size was... from 50 cents to \$5 were... attendance at rehearsal... and a regular rehearsal... in advance.

...on the opening concert... Beethoven's Symphony... had conducted in its... 1841. Years later, the New... this inaugural event... of enthusiasm. The... was the C Minor of... musicians almost went... They threw themselves... laughing, weeping,... as a breath. The effect on... similar. The enthusiasm... The success of the... at the start."

...relationship with both... and returned to... Attempting to repli... experience in... arranged for the Philhar... Beethoven's Ninth... American premiere. It... 1846 under the baton... member of the Phil... and one of its occa... during this period. The... been translated into... by Hill and the... an astronomical

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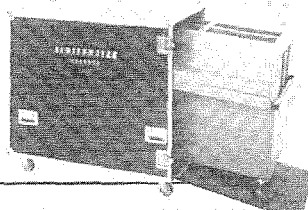
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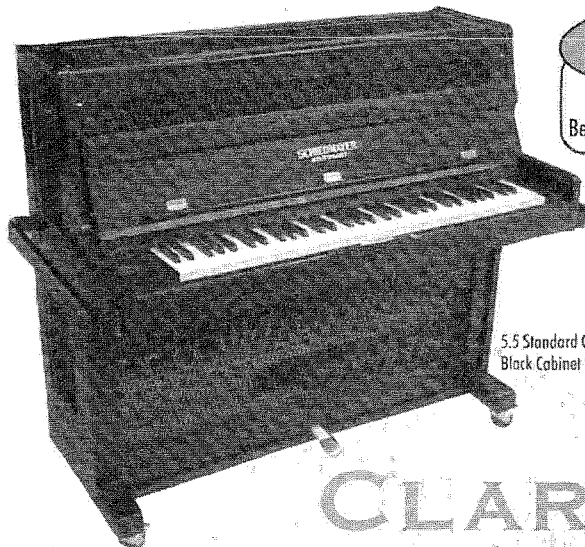
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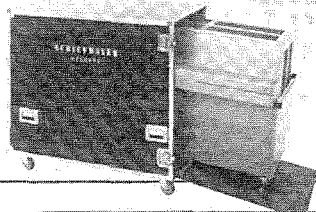
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heads a prestigious student competition and has seen many artists develop over the years says he tends to be suspicious of the prodigies who win competitions at a very young age. Some are brilliant imitators rather than true creators, he thinks. Others are so gifted in so many areas that they might just as well end up doing computer science at Stanford or math at Harvard. He'd bet more often on later-developing composers—those hitting their stride in their late teens or, even better, their twenties.

Tom Broido of Theodore Presser, who has worked with a number of young composers over the years, is concerned about quality-of-life issues. "Many composers describe the impulse to compose as irresistible, like a moth is drawn to a flame," he says. "But the happiest ones are those who resist being drawn into that flame completely. A diverse life is much richer. Music should be what composers *do*, not the sum total of who they are."

The youthful Chang agrees; last year he told an interviewer that too much of anything isn't good—"You'll kill yourself mentally." So he's careful to keep a well-rounded schedule of activities, golfing and fencing and hanging out with friends. Carey draws and paints. Sinha is always on the run, with her bird-photography projects and robot-building.

There are those, however, for whom a "balanced" life just isn't appealing. Jeanette Fontanella, the mother of fourteen-year-old composer and violinist Ann, says of her daughter: "She hasn't become part of a peer group. She's not into sports. She only plays cards for relaxation. Everything is music with Ann, from when she wakes up till she goes to bed. We do not push her—she is driven."

Perhaps this single-minded devotion will last, perhaps not. Some young composers seem not to have chosen music; rather, music has chosen them. It inhabits their souls. It is who they are. ∞

Diana Burgwyn is the author of books, program notes, reviews, and feature articles about classical music and musicians.

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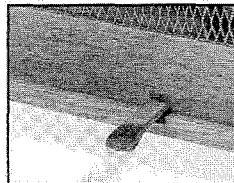
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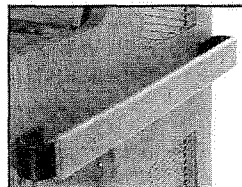
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draw upon that expertise. But don't assume this is the case. They may be looking for some diversion from what they do every day in their work environment.

Trustee Involvement. Trustees of nonprofits tend to align themselves in what I visualize as three concentric circles of involvement. Those in the center circle have an unrestrained enthusiasm for the orchestra; a passion for its musical product; an understanding of and commitment to its mission; and a willingness to give freely of their wisdom, time, and financial resources. I call them the "A's." Board chairs and CEOs, take good care of your A's. Thank them.

The most meaningful work for most trustees lies in their service on committees or task forces of the board. That is where they have the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and share their expertise.

Encourage them. Do not take them for granted. They are typically the 20 percent of your board who do 80 percent of the work and give 80 percent of the board gifts.

The next ring includes those who are loyal and reasonably committed but who, perhaps because they are new to the board or because of other demands on their time, are not in the center circle. They might be moving toward the center or, in some cases, they may have previously been there and have taken a step back. These are the "B's." Take good care of them, too. Help them find ways to become A's—to move to the center circle.

Lastly, there will always be a few "C's." They may be disgruntled A's or B's who have become upset over some issue. More often they are folks who joined the board because a friend or acquaintance recruited them, but have no real interest in the orchestra itself, do not attend concerts, and have simply never found their way into either of the inner circles. They give modestly, seldom attend meetings, and are not engaged. Whatever else you do, do not ignore them. C's usually add little value. At worst, they can be a negative influence. If you can find ways to engage them and at least get them to the B ring, do so. If you

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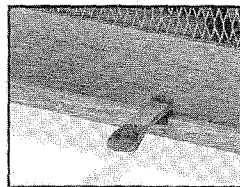


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New England, and the Second String Quartet as one of Ives's radically forward-looking efforts is the Fourth. It is an amazing work: the two halves of the orchestra splitting up in the second movement, one surging ahead while the other stays at tempo, is a stunning effect, and the slow dying away over a descending ostinato in the final movement is sublime. I love the work.

That said, as gorgeous as the third-movement fugue is, it was borrowed from the First String Quartet which he had written in the 19th century. The uproarious parts of the second movement were orchestrated (effectively, with wonderful touches added) from the "Hawthorne" movement of the *Concord Sonata*. The Fourth Symphony doesn't exhibit the unity of the Third Symphony; it doesn't seem all cut from the same cloth. The conception is a cross between Beethoven's Ninth—the contrast of philosophies of life represented by individual movements—and the *Concord Sonata*. The symphony is stirring, each performance justifiably a major event. But by 1916, when Ives seems to have completed it, his capacity for turning out new works was beginning to fail, and the mismatch of movements shows it.

The other Ives works that might be considered symphonies include *Three Places in New England* (originally called *New England Symphony*), the individual pieces of the *Holidays Symphony* ("Fourth of July" et al.), and the questionably unfinished *Universe Symphony*. *Three Places in New England* is doubtless the Ives orchestral work that has won the most secure place in the repertoire, and with good reason: It is a perfectly formed symphony in the slow/fast/ slow mode of Ives's Third, plus all the tempo clashes, dissonances, polytonalities, and rhythmic complexities that Ives let loose with when not inhibited. The *Holidays Symphony* is, as Ives seemed to recognize, more of a suite; even if "Fourth of July" is something of a scherzo and "Thanksgiving" a profound choral finale, each has a very self-contained form, satisfying in itself.

The *Universe Symphony* is more controversial. Considered unfinished and unfinishable in Ives's lifetime, it was only a legend until Larry Austin borrowed the materials to make his own "completed" version. In 1996, however, New York microtonal bas