

# ARE WE DOING ENOUGH?

Sitting recently in the pews of a church in Chapel Hill listening to a choral concert by the same men's chorus that I sang with in college, I had a moment where I realized how my life today was shaped so dramatically by the experiences that I had as a young person growing up in and around Boston. Some of my earliest participation with orchestras came through my experiences as a chorus member behind an orchestra, and some of the best musical memories of my life were singing such choral-orchestral masterworks as Mozart's C-minor Mass and Brahms's Requiem. Further, and unbeknownst to me then, the time I spent managing that chorus during college was preparing me for a life in arts management: selling tickets, raising money, arranging concert logistics, producing recordings and planning tours.

Long before then, though, I was enormously fortunate to have access to all kinds of outstanding musical and educational resources. The resources were things I took for granted at the time and only later realized how rare they are. In my particular case, I spent my Saturday mornings at the New England Conservatory along with other junior and senior high school students, and a typical Saturday morning included chorus, music theory class, chamber music coaching, and my private piano lesson. Afternoons were dedicated to youth orchestra so for me that typically meant sitting in Jordan Hall listening to conductor Benjamin Zander work with the orchestra while I tried to catch up on homework, as there wasn't much of a role for me to play in the orchestra itself. But here in this special place each Saturday were promising young people from perhaps a four-state region, all coming together to learn from the most talented faculty in the area (many of whom were members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and to learn from each other, building a camaraderie and commitment that urged them to take their music making to a higher level.

Twenty years later, our lives have all gone in very different directions, of course. Some are indeed professional musicians, others are arts administrators, and the rest are doctors, lawyers, teachers, and all manner of vocations. But I'm confident that the environment and opportunity which was afforded us as young people shaped who we are today. For my part I owe my love of music to those hours spent at NEC on Saturdays, to the teachers and educators who were a part of that experience, to my parents, and to my earliest experiences in arts management in college.

All of this brought me to a realization: are we as a community and we as a symphony orchestra organization doing everything that we can, indeed, everything that we *need* to be doing, to provide the young people of this state the quality and quantity of music education experiences that they deserve? Truthfully, I do not think so. It is a fact that no major American orchestra dedicates as much of its performance schedule to the education of young people as we do, and that's a tradition and mission that I hope will continue forever. What we do really well as an organization is expose tens of thousands of children each year to music and the live orchestra experience. For many it is their first such exposure, and the hope behind the program is that it will inspire some



*David Chambliss Worters,  
President & CEO*

number of them to pick up an instrument and pursue it further. Beyond these concerts, we also offer a myriad of other programs, including sending our musicians to work as coaches with the Triangle Youth Philharmonic and an annual youth concerto competition.

But I also think there are opportunities for us to do even more, and we're taking some first steps in that regard. One very exciting example is our upcoming ensembles-in-schools program, where young students from designated schools will have the opportunity to participate in master classes, have ensembles visit their schools, enjoy backstage experiences, and other elements all designed to enhance the curriculum and orchestra concert experience that we traditionally provide.

But what of those young people in this state who have already demonstrated some proficiency in a musical instrument, show some promise, and have the potential to become a true talent? Here we don't have as much to offer when clearly there is such tremendous opportunity. I see no reason why the Symphony could not be the catalyst for bringing these young people together, and provide them with continuing musical education experiences, whether they are similar to those experiences I remember from NEC or whether they are entirely different. And who better for these students to learn from, of course, than our very own orchestra musicians? Many of our musicians already teach young people, but those efforts are private and not interconnected. Imagine if we had a school of our own, a place where young people could intersect, and not only study their instrument privately, but play with each other, perhaps in a chamber ensemble or chamber orchestra. Perhaps some of our visiting artists could coach them. The possibilities are truly endless.

Right now the Symphony is at the very beginning of a strategic planning process that will guide our organization's priorities and development through the next several years. Included in this plan are some of the obvious things, such as the importance of growing our orchestra's ranks, and doing everything we can to be recruiting and retaining the very best musicians we can. But I am also hopeful that, working together with partners in the community, we will be able to develop plans that could allow us to expand and deepen our music education programs in some of these ways. The Symphony has an important role to play and rightly can be an advocate for music education throughout the state.

In this issue of *Opus* we explore several different aspects of music – how it affects us, what it means in our lives, why we need it, and how we pass it on to the next generation. There's an overarching theme of music education in much of it, and we hope that readers will not only enjoy reading but will think a bit about what the future of the North Carolina Symphony's music education initiatives could look like. We'd love to hear from you.