

GREAT MUSIC MATTERS! NOW MORE THAN EVER

Shortly after the opening of our new concert hall in 2001, I was approached at a concert by a gentleman whom I surmised to be perhaps in his late 60s. I had given some brief remarks at the beginning of the concert, and so he recognized my face despite the fact that I was fairly new in my job in North Carolina. He told me a story I had already heard many times, and have since heard hundreds and possibly even thousands of times, although he told it with an ending that I had never heard before. He said that as a boy, growing up in a rural part of the state, he was fortunate enough to have heard the North Carolina Symphony when it traveled to his local school. He recalled Dr. Ben Swalin on the podium, the music that the orchestra played, and the songs that they sang. He said that that performance had been his first-ever exposure to a live, full orchestra, and that it had made an enormous impression on him, contributing to what became a lifelong love affair with classical music. He said that he guessed that I would not yet have been born when this all occurred, but for all these years he had never had an opportunity to thank anyone for the great gift that this orchestra had given him as a young person. And, he continued, if it would be all right with me he'd like to thank me for what this orchestra had done for him all those years earlier. It was the kind of moment that catches you off guard, but was a poignant reminder of why we do what we do.

In our previous issue of Opus, I offered some of my thoughts about supporting the arts in tough times, and why what your orchestra does is important, in good times and in bad. These are unprecedented times for American orchestras and, collectively and individually, orchestras are continuing to do what they do best, which is to play some of the best music ever known, to inspire and uplift, to educate, and to provide an essential building block to any community that aspires to greatness. A significant part of my job is to make the case (to the audience, to the legislature, to potential funders) for support for the orchestra, particularly in times like these.

Indeed, over the past two months I've spent an enormous amount of time at our state legislature, and have had the opportunity to tell the unique story of this state's orchestra. I've noted that by some counts there are as many as 2,000 orchestras in this country. Around 50 of them (or so) are large enough to support full-time employment for their musicians. But only one of them is designed the way we are, with nearly one-quarter of our performances dedicated to the musical education of young persons, and more than one-half of our concerts taking place outside our home concert hall. These traditions date back to the 1940s and continue today.

Consider some of these facts... Orchestras serve as economic engines for their communities, creating an environment that allows business to recruit and retain the top talent they need to be successful. Nonprofit arts and cultural performances return real

dollars to local communities in the form of parking and restaurant revenues, jobs, and many other economic impacts (\$166 billion in economic activity and 5.7 million jobs, by one recent study). And because the great bulk of our expenses are people, an enormous portion of what we spend stays right here in this community. Our musicians are your neighbors, taxpayers, and oftentimes teachers and members of other important organizations. (Another fact: the arts generate almost \$30 billion just in tax revenue each year at the local, state and federal level.)

Some of these facts are helpful in making the case, but I also think there's a peril in trying to make that case purely in academic or statistical terms. For me, there's a power far greater than even those classic arguments for the importance of the arts, or our orchestra in particular. And that is the real impact of music in our lives and in our history. Truth is, music is enormously important to us, whether we think about it or not. It plays a starring role in just about all of our major moments, in some form or another. Music has brought our communities together in times of celebration and times of great loss. Music has unified people of different nations and cultures. And music has allowed us to gain access to the human experience. For some, it is virtually a spiritual experience, and for others an elixir.

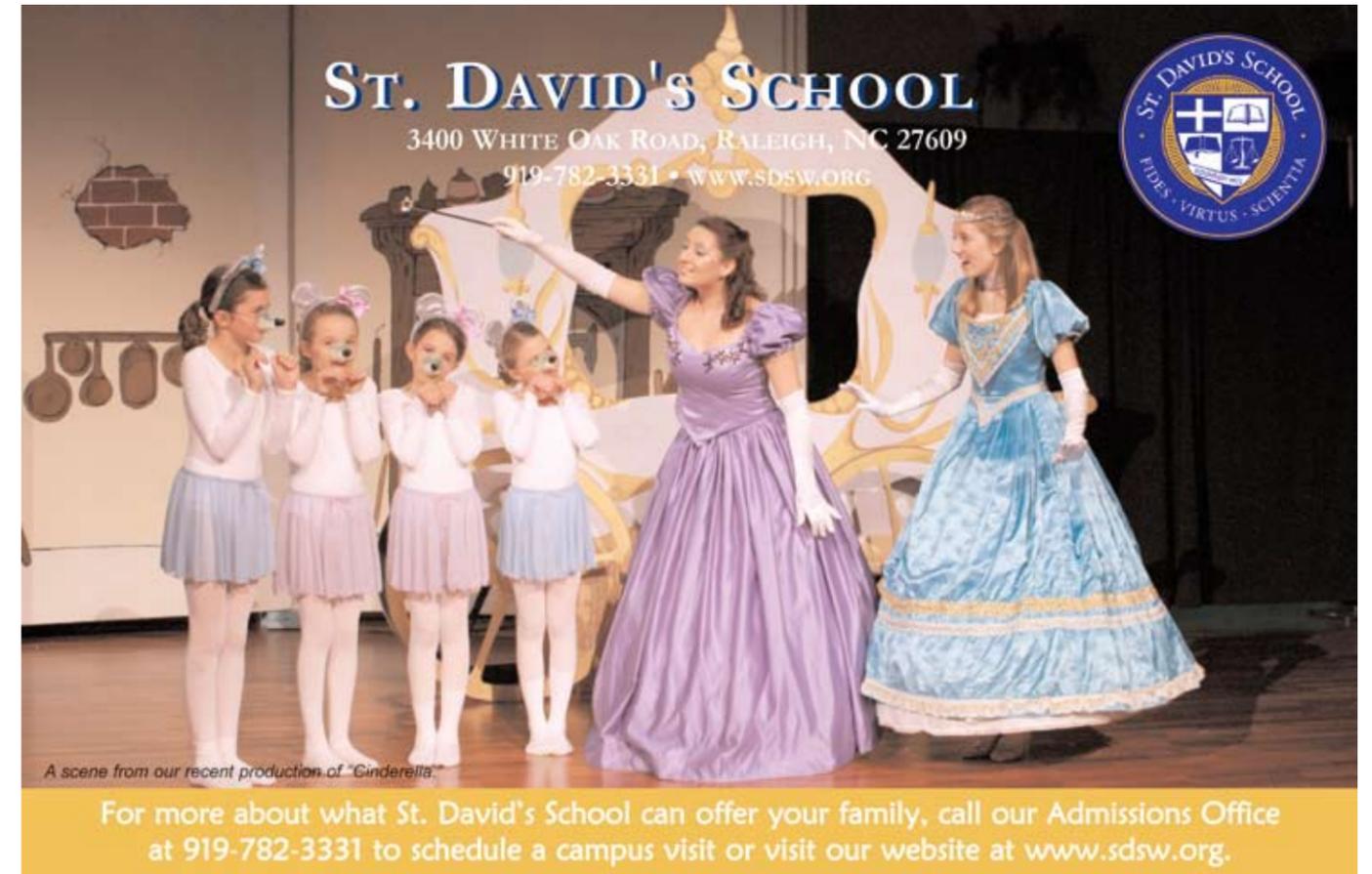
Wynton Marsalis put it very nicely in a recent speech he gave at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. He said, "A financial inheritance can be accurately assessed in dollars, but what is the value of an artistic heritage? Who calculates the value of 'Amazing Grace' or 'Yankee Doodle' or 'Go Down Moses'? Those spirituals were the first body of identifiable, purely American musical art... all kinds of people from all over made one through tragedy."

For the one gentleman who told me his story of his first exposure to live orchestral music courtesy of this orchestra's commitment to statewide service and music education, there are thousands more who have a similar story to tell. They all start with "I remember the day the Symphony came to town." It's the legacy of this orchestra and one that makes it unique in the field of American orchestras. And it's one that has only been possible with the support of our audiences. As you are enjoying this issue of Opus and gaining some insights into the lives and experiences of some of the individuals that collectively make up our Symphony family, please consider a gift. Your gift will in turn bring the gift of music to some young person who fifty years from now will take the time to say "thank you."

With thanks,



David Chambless Worters, President & CEO



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A scene from our recent production of "Cinderella."

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