Stony Brook University

Sixty Years at the New York Philharmonic

Through the Eyes of Clarinetist Stanley Drucker:

An Oral History of the Philharmonic Community, 1948-2008

A Dissertation Presented

by

Amy Beth Shapiro

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

(Music History and Theory)

Stony Brook University

May 2015

Stony Brook University

The Graduate School

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Abstract

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When Stanley Drucker, a 19-year-old clarinetist from Brooklyn, joined the New York Philharmonic in 1948, he became part of a "men's club," populated primarily by European immigrants who had to find supplementary sources of income to augment the orchestra's meager 28-week season. By the time he gave his final performances as Principal Clarinet, six decades later, he was surrounded by a far more diverse assemblage of musicians who had vied to win coveted lucrative year-round employment in the prestigious ensemble. This dissertation takes advantage of the rare opportunity granted by Drucker's historic tenure to offer an oral history of the social, financial, and logistical changes that transformed the New York Philharmonic between 1948 and 2008.

Previous institutional histories have presented chronological and factual data about the formation and development of the orchestra since 1842, and, in some cases, have considered the Philharmonic's relationship with its audience. This study refocuses attention on the long-neglected concept of the Philharmonic as a community, in and of itself, comprising individuals with voices worthy of exposure. In addition to an extended series of interviews with Drucker, fifteen other orchestra members were interviewed, as well as two composers who became drawn into the Philharmonic community when they were commissioned to write concertos for Drucker. Excerpts from these personal narratives are then woven together with contextual and documentary information, concentrating on four main issues: the changing face of the orchestra, orchestral logistics, the commissioning and premiering of new works, and the music directors. By allowing overarching themes and greater significances to emerge from the words of the Philharmonic community itself, this work is intended to reach as broad a readership as possible, so as to demystify an institution too often thought of as elitist. In so doing, it provides an innovatively structured examination of how the New York Philharmonic community changed over a 60-year period and just what it means to be an orchestral musician in the 21st century.

This dissertation is dedicated, with great love, to my grandparents,

Alice and Seymour Kaye.

They bestowed upon me the invaluable gift of reverence for the written word and a healthy awareness of the necessity of improvisation. I am so very grateful for the time I was given with them and carry them with me in all that I do.

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Acknowledgments

There is simply no way to ever account for all the reasons why this dissertation would never have been possible without my parents, Carol and Marty Shapiro. Their contributions are too numerous to list, for they have always fully supported my every endeavor throughout my life. Though my name may grace the title page, this project is really the culmination of the efforts of my family, including my very loyal "little sister," Lilo.

My advisor, Jane Sugarman, has consistently served as a fount of guidance, offering advice, suggestions, and strategies that bolstered my resolve and improved every aspect of my work. It has been a pleasure to be able to continue our relationship for all these years.

The Music Department at Stony Brook University is populated with generously broadminded individuals, who have not only allowed me to go off and explore all my interests, but have also encouraged me to grow and become my own particular kind of hybrid scholar. I especially wish to thank Judy Lochhead, Peter Winkler, Ryan Minor, and Dan Weymouth. I am also indebted to Gerry Albarelli for agreeing to join my committee as outside reader.

Naomi and Stanley Drucker introduced me to the fascinating realm of oral history before any of us had actually even heard of such a field. No one could have guessed how far those initial interviews would lead, but it has been a trip I have been lucky to take. I extend my gratitude to encompass the entire Music Department at Hofstra University, for providing the right environment for those "firsts" to occur.

New York Philharmonic Archivist Barbara Haws granted me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to curate the exhibit commemorating Stanley Drucker's career in 2009. Being able to watch audience members explore and enjoy the work that I had installed at Avery Fisher Hall was an incredible experience I will never forget. I am also grateful to Associate Archivist Richard Wandel, for helping me with research on so many occasions and, since his retirement, I have already had occasion to thank his successor, Assistant Archivist Gabryel Smith, for further assistance.

I cannot overstate just how privileged I feel to have been so warmly welcomed into the Philharmonic Community. I enjoyed every single interview I was able to conduct and will always fondly remember the time I spent with the fifteen musicians who were kind enough to share their insight with me: Evangeline Benedetti, Carter Brey, Jon Deak, Glenn Dicterow, David Finlayson, Judith LeClair, Kenneth Mirkin, Newton Mansfield, Orin O'Brien, Cynthia Phelps, Sheryl Staples, Sherry Sylar, Yoko Takebe, Qiang Tu, and Liang Wang.

It was thrilling for me to be able to interview two more extended members of the Philharmonic community: composers John Corigliano and William Bolcom. I remain overwhelmed by their generosity in agreeing to speak with me, and am indebted to their respective assistants, Mark Baechle and Carol Wargelin, for handling the logistics of those meetings.

Prologue: The Philharmonic Community Quilt

> The New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra will have five new men next season….The clarinet section is the one most affected by change of personnel. Leonard Schaller is the only one of the four present members remaining, for Simeon Bellison and Otto Conrad, veteran clarinetists, are being pensioned and Alexander Williams has resigned. Robert E. McGinnis…who was first clarinetist under Arturo Toscanini in the NBC Symphony last season, will be the new solo clarinetist with the Philharmonic. The new second clarinetist will be Napoleon Cerminara….The other new clarinetist will be 19-year-old Stanley Walter Drucker of Brooklyn. He will be the youngest member of the orchestra.[1]

It was but a concise five-paragraph article, surely easy to miss while flipping through the edition of *The New York Times* published on June 23, 1948. The prose was neither particularly memorable nor seemingly significant in the greater scope of current events. Yet, let us move ahead some six decades and, once again, peruse *The New York Times* from June 5, 2009: "Stanley Drucker….will soon enter something bigger than folklore. Legend maybe? History? He is retiring from the Philharmonic after 60 years, the longest tenure of any player in the orchestra's existence….Perhaps most remarkable is the fact that Mr. Drucker is only the third principal clarinetist of the Philharmonic in almost 90 years."[2] The reams of statistics are certainly impressive: upon his retirement, Stanley Drucker had performed in approximately two-thirds of all concerts given by the New York Philharmonic since its founding in 1842. His Philharmonic career had encompassed the tenures of a succession of nine music directors and he had appeared as a soloist 191 times. On two occasions, the Philharmonic commissioned concertos specifically for him to premiere with the orchestra and, as the ultimate sign of the esteem he had accrued, he became the only "inside" orchestra member to ever be elevated to the roster of honorary members of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, joining an

[1] *The New York Times*, "Rises are Granted by Philharmonic," June 23, 1948.

[2] Daniel J. Wakin, "Ending a 60-Year Gig at the N.Y. Philharmonic," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2009.

illustrious list of names ranging from Felix Mendelssohn in 1846, to Harry Truman in 1945, to Aaron Copland in 1970.

Perhaps what is even more astonishing is to simply take a moment to think about how significantly the New York Philharmonic, itself, had changed over those sixty years, and to come to the realization that Drucker was the one constant that remained. In 1948, he began his first season as Assistant Principal and E-flat Clarinet in an orchestra that he depicts as bearing scarce resemblance to what audience members see today:

> In 1948, of course, we were still at Carnegie Hall, and the players were all European, pretty much to the last man. At the time it was all men. And there was, I would say, a lot of camaraderie but each group had their own ways: There was an Italian group, and a Russian group, and a Jewish group. There was a lot of meeting in the club room (as it was called) which was adjacent to the locker room, where there were constant card games, chess games going on, and a lot of pipe and cigar smoking and sort of jovial things: a lot of laughing and fooling around and things like that. It was a real meeting place….So one had a feeling of belonging to a club. It was really sort of a fun kind of existence.[3]

Drucker played under the leadership of Bruno Walter, Leopold Stokowski, and Dimitri Mitropoulos, before Leonard Bernstein took the helm as music director in 1958 and, two years later, offered him a relatively rare internal promotion. As the New York Philharmonic's Principal Clarinet for the next 48 seasons, he sat center stage as everyone else around him came and, in time, departed, as he performed with approximately 450 different musicians during his Philharmonic career. Reflecting upon his colleagues, he remembers:

> The story, the perception, was always, "They're a bunch of tough guys and they eat conductors for breakfast." I'll say this: in my early years there were a lot of characters, people of individual character, that probably were what I would call street fighters, or came up from the gutter and

[3] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

achieved the top of their profession through a lot of personal grit and persona. Not so much of that is needed today but in those days there was a lot of tough guy images, where there was a lot of swagger and bragging and kidding, a lot of joking. The image was there, but as I found it, as it grew over the years, it really didn't exist in any kind of meaningful way.[4]

The orchestras have evolved. Our orchestra has evolved like all of society. There were a lot of people that came out of different cultures, that had different backgrounds….Years ago, perhaps a lot of the musicians came out of a freelance lifestyle, where they might have played in a café, or in a theater, or in a regional opera house, or in a string quartet, or in a situation not trained in a straight line from the conservatory to the symphony orchestra desk. And everybody was struggling to make ends meet. Seasons were very short in orchestras. Even in the New York Philharmonic they only had 28 weeks. I would say the tough guy image was one of the New York street scene….but there was also a great style and personality, individuality, and kindness, and humor: great humor existed.[5]

Today, I'd say, young people that study in a conservatory, music school, and they go through the audition process to one post and then to a higher post, they're not as defined….It's less colorful in a certain sense…but it's more educated in a large sense….People are more aware of things, of ways and choices, where there weren't so many in my early years….The evolution has probably extended to a lot of artistic places around the world, where everything, more or less, sounds the same today. It's not so nationalistic….[6]

Of course, now we're half and half, women and men, and many more American-born members. The ones that aren't are mostly from Asia. I would say, player for player, perhaps the players are better than they might have been. You can't tell from the recordings, though, which is an interesting point. You hear the recordings and you hear a certain kind of a soul in the sound that always existed in the Philharmonic. But I think…more string players could get up and play a difficult violin concerto or a cello concerto than could have done years ago when players were mostly just emphasizing their orchestral talents.[7]

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[4] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 30, 2009.

> And then it's more corporate in a way. There's year-round employment, which came in in the Bernstein years….Orchestras have evolved. They have to fill a lot of different needs for a community and they have to fill up a year.[8]

Drucker's recollections provide vivid "oral picture postcards" of the New York Philharmonic of 1948 in tandem with that of the Philharmonic of 2008. He reveals the human faces within a long-standing institution that has undergone profound social, financial, and logistical changes. Over the course of his 60 years at the New York Philharmonic, he bore witness as a bastion of male European immigrants admitted first women, in the 1960s, and then Asians the following decade; remarkably, by the time of his retirement, over 30 years later, the most obvious change in the Philharmonic could be absorbed by just taking a glimpse at the abundance of female and Asian faces joining him onstage for his last performances. Having made his solo debut with the orchestra at Carnegie Hall in 1961 under Bernstein's baton, he watched as the Philharmonic decamped the following year, resettling in its brand new Lincoln Center amenities, where he would present two world premieres and, eventually, his final solo appearances with departing Music Director Lorin Maazel on the stage of Avery Fisher Hall. He beheld the transformation of an essentially part-time, 28-week job, into the kind of steady, year-round self-sustaining occupation that became attractive enough to forever change both the definition and desirability of the term "orchestral musician." As the New York Philharmonic readied for the arrival of a new, relatively young, American-born music director, Alan Gilbert, Drucker could recall the transitions between the nine maestros he had performed under. In short, Stanley Drucker had truly seen it all.

[8] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 30, 2009.

Drucker's retirement not only marked the end of an era, but also afforded an unprecedented chance to embark upon an oral-history-based study of the New York Philharmonic at a moment particularly ripe for greater introspection. The Philharmonic is often prominently publicized as the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States and, as such, it has logically served as the subject for five institutional histories. While needing to acknowledge the ground covered by those predecessors, as an oral historian, I first seek to stake out the vastly distinct premise that, in forming the basis of my dissertation, sets my work apart from what has come before: the very concept of "community" that Drucker himself mentioned.

The "Philharmonic Community"

Merriam-Webster defines community as, variously: "a unified body of individuals," "an interacting population of various kinds of individuals…in a common location," and "a body of persons…having a common history or common social, economic, and political interests."[9] While other scholars, as Drucker broached above, have sought to address the manner in which the New York Philharmonic fits into the community around it, particularly its current or potential audience, what has so often been obscured is the essence of the community that exists within the institution itself. It was this longstanding neglect that led me to envision a new way of studying this orchestra by focusing on the diverse and talented musicians who come together to comprise the "Philharmonic Community."

For my purposes, I have chosen to use this concept of a "Philharmonic community" in a rather narrow sense, to refer to only the actual members of the orchestra, for I sought to examine this institution from the inside, exploring the ways life at the New York Philharmonic has

[9] *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (Application, 2012).

changed for these players by enabling their own words to be both heard and carefully considered. Though these musicians may not opt to use the precise word "community" to describe the orchestra, they regularly employ language that evokes a strong collective bond and purpose. From the manner in which they refer to their particular section, or certain colleagues, or even go so far as to refer to the orchestra as a family, it is clear that my definition of the "Philharmonic community" is valid. This is, though, by no means, a hermetic community, nor is it a uniform one. There exists, within any orchestra, a hierarchy, in which principal players and section leaders clearly have more influence both within and without the ensemble. This natural power differential is likely reflected in the attitudes of players regarding not only fellow orchestra members, but also the management, board of directors, and music director. Though the members of my specifically delineated Philharmonic community frequently interact with these administrators and directors, I do not view those individuals as existing within the community. Rather, I envision them moving freely in and out of the amorphous bounds, at times even going so far as to assume a closer relationship more akin to a commissioned composer or artist-in-residence. In the course of my study, I will, in fact, introduce two such composers as examples of what I consider extended members of the Philharmonic community.

As an exceptionally prominent member of the orchestra, Drucker's 60-year career with the New York Philharmonic is unlikely to ever be duplicated and, for an oral historian, his experiences offered a once-in-a-lifetime chance to delve into this community. Clearly, such an enterprise could never have been envisioned without procuring generous cooperation from Drucker. Indeed, I initially felt compelled to undertake this study due to the fact that I happened to find myself in the fortuitous position of having unfettered access and was, thus, uniquely situated to produce a dissertation that no other scholar could. My association with Stanley

Drucker dates back to my years as an undergraduate at Hofstra University, where I studied with his wife, clarinetist Naomi Drucker, from 1998 to 2002. As I came to develop a close relationship with her, she not only introduced me to her husband, but also encouraged him to work with me for my first foray into the realm of oral history, long before I had ever heard of such a field. Ultimately, the interviews I conducted with Stanley Drucker for my Hofstra senior Honors Project, regarding Bernstein and his Clarinet Sonata, sparked a newfound interest that shaped the rest of my academic career. I went on to study with Drucker, himself, and, over the years, as I continued to grow as an oral historian while at New York University and, finally, Stony Brook University, we would periodically find ourselves back in front of a tape recorder in his home in Massapequa, Long Island. When I received advance knowledge of his coming retirement, I knew I had to seize upon this opportunity, and he readily agreed to continue and greatly expand upon our longstanding series of interviews in order to make this dissertation possible. Furthermore, I was privileged to work closely with New York Philharmonic Archivist Barbara Haws and Associate Archivist Richard Wandel (since retired) to curate the exhibit, commemorating Drucker's career, that was installed at Avery Fisher Hall in June 2009. I am grateful for that experience and, obviously, deeply indebted to Naomi and Stanley Drucker.

No one person, of course, could ever fully grasp the "big picture" of an institution like the New York Philharmonic, or, in this case, the "New York Philharmonic Community." Therefore, I set off to obtain a wide range of different perspectives, and I consider myself fortunate to have been able to speak with fifteen other orchestra members. I felt it was essential for me to interview a representative subset of the Philharmonic, including a balanced number of members of both genders, spanning different generations and backgrounds, and seated in different sections onstage. I did have an initial list of key individuals I considered most able to address the issues I

was planning to examine, but eventually found it even more worthwhile to allow myself to be guided by both circumstance and happenstance in my selection of potential subjects. Intending to be as unobtrusive as possible, I made contact solely via e-mail and my inquiries were met with an approximate 50-percent acceptance rate. Most interviews took place at Avery Fisher Hall and all were carefully tailored to the time constraints of the players. Though I prepared quite specific questions for each individual, I also made sure to use similar language to broach certain basic topics with every Philharmonic member.

It is important to keep in mind that my dissertation has been shaped by the very self-selecting nature of my interviewees, for the people who agreed to meet with me did so purely out of their own willingness to help with my research and contribute their own generous testimony on multitudinous facets of orchestral life. If, at times, they seem to present an overly "rosy" picture of the New York Philharmonic as an institution, one might logically infer that the members most eager to speak about their experiences are also those who are most satisfied with their careers. I am thankful that these busy players found time, between rehearsals, concerts, and other obligations, to welcome me into their community. While their individual profiles will emerge in succeeding chapters, and readers will be privy to a wealth of narratives I was lucky enough to be able to preserve and draw upon, I do wish to acknowledge, and introduce, these musicians, in the order in which each one joined the New York Philharmonic:

Born in Poland, violinist Newton Mansfield joined the Philharmonic in 1961 and remains a distinctive presence there to this day. Bassist Orin O'Brien made history in 1966 when she was appointed by Bernstein as the first permanent female member of the orchestra. The following year, she was joined by cellist Evangeline Benedetti, who was the first member granted maternity leave, and who retired in 2011. Composer Jon Deak joined the orchestra in 1969,

served as Associate Principal Bass from 1973 to 2009, and, since his nominal retirement, has become the Young Composer Advocate of the New York Philharmonic. Born in Japan, Yoko Takebe was the Philharmonic's second Asian member, joining her husband, Michael Gilbert, in the violin section in 1979. While she retired in 2014, 13 years after her spouse, their son, Alan Gilbert, remains as the orchestra's current music director.

Having achieved the longest tenure as Concertmaster in the history of the New York Philharmonic, Glenn Dicterow retired in 2014 after 34 years. Principal Bassoon since 1981, Judith LeClair premiered *The Five Sacred Trees* by John Williams in 1995. Violist Kenneth Mirkin, who joined the Philharmonic in 1982, is an incredibly motivated committee member who has been particularly involved in contract negotiations. Associate Principal Oboe since 1984, Sherry Sylar has been active in the Artistic Advisory Committee. Trombonist David Finlayson joined the Philharmonic in 1985 and maintains a blog that has attracted media attention.

Principal Viola since 1992, Cynthia Phelps premiered Sofia Gubaidulina's *Two Paths, Music for Two Solo Violas and Symphony Orchestra* in 1999. Cellist Qiang Tu was the first musician from China to join the Philharmonic in 1995. Principal Cello Carter Brey had already made a name for himself as a soloist and chamber musician when he decided to take an orchestral position in 1996. As Principal Associate Concertmaster since 1998, Sheryl Staples has become a familiar figure, frequently filling the concertmaster chair. Born in China, Liang Wang became a symbol of that country's growing presence in classical music when he was appointed Principal Oboe in 2006.

As previously indicated, in addition to this impressive list of Philharmonic members, I was also honored to conduct interviews with the two composers who became drawn into the

New York Philharmonic community when they were commissioned to write concertos for Drucker. While John Corigliano was always, in some sense, a member of the community, since his father, John Corigliano, Sr., had served as Concertmaster from 1943 to 1966, his 1977 Clarinet Concerto was the first work of his to be performed by his hometown orchestra. I was able to schedule an interview with him in New Orleans when he reunited with Drucker for a performance of his Concerto in October 2007. William Bolcom can be considered a more distant member of the Philharmonic community, whose Clarinet Concerto, premiered by Drucker in 1992, is one of only five of his orchestral works programmed by the orchestra. He was kind enough to meet with me when he was staying in Manhattan in April 2013. It was thrilling to speak with both of these Pulitzer-Prize-winning composers and I am incredibly appreciative for the insights they shared with me, truly enriching my view of the process of commissioning, writing, and premiering a new work.

Readers should keep in mind that, as is customary with oral history studies, excerpts from my personal interviews have been subject to light editing for ease of reading. There are a wide variety of approaches to the presentation of conversational speech, and I have, as much as possible, aimed to retain both the intent and the unique character of each subject's voice. At the same time, in order to render spoken utterances into clearly understandable prose, I have removed such clutter as repeated words and confusing additional words, and have also attempted to clarify overly awkward phraseology. In trying to recreate at least a sense of the original interview setting, I have occasionally used italics in order to indicate especial emphasis. I hope I have managed to strike the right balance between personality and intelligibility, and take all responsibility for any remaining issues readers may have regarding grammar or meaning.

Weaving the Patchwork Quilt

In my examination of the Philharmonic, I have been greatly influenced by the groundbreaking work of Vivian Perlis, from her seminal 1974 study, *Charles Ives Remembered: An Oral History,* through her 2005 volume, co-authored with Libby Van Cleve, *Composers' Voices from Ives to Ellington: An Oral History of American Music*. When she initially started out, she was: "…met with more than a little skepticism….Musicologists…looked at oral history as being anecdotal compared to the traditional Germanic musicology that has been the basis of the profession throughout the years. There was a certain amount of reticence to accept recent events…for scholarly projects, not to mention a general neglect of American music."[10] It is largely thanks to her own determination as a "pioneer" that much has changed today, as both oral history and, especially, American music have assumed greater "legitimacy."

While Perlis discusses oral history as a "way of telling history from the bottom up—from the viewpoint of the workers…women, and others who had previously had no voice…" she also asserts: "Having started with Ives and being interested in contemporary music, I felt that the most important people to target were the composers. I still feel that way."[11] Such a viewpoint is a logical extension of her early research endeavors and has been taken up by other scholars, as in Ann McCutchan's 1999 book, *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process*.[12] Though inspired by Perlis's initiative and methodology, my study has originated from quite different precepts, for, in order to examine the long-neglected New York Philharmonic

[10] Vivian Perlis and Libby Van Cleve, *Composers' Voices from Ives to Ellington: An Oral History Of American Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), xxiv.

[11] Ibid., xviii, xxv.

[12] Anne McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

community, I needed to focus my work on the very performers who form this living, breathing organism. I strongly believe that the perspectives and experiences of performers are every bit as valid as those of composers and, in this case, the actual members of the New York Philharmonic were uniquely qualified to address the changes this institution weathered over the six decades between 1948 and 2008. Thus, as previously outlined, while I did interview two composers, the bulk of my dissertation is based upon the contributions of sixteen performers. Furthermore, it was never my intention to produce a traditional, primarily presentational, work of oral history. Instead, I aspired to analyze an imposing organization from within, employing oral history in a new way to produce a different kind of hybrid study, combining elements of both oral history and institutional history.

Drucker's tenure set out a time frame for my dissertation, and now that his voice has been thoroughly introduced, he will provide continuity for the exploration that is to follow. Indeed, I choose to, somewhat fancifully, perhaps, view this community as a multi-hued patchwork quilt, in which Drucker will serve as the sturdy thread that periodically resurfaces to hold the patches together. As I concluded each of my interview sessions with the fifteen other musicians and two composers, I stored away these patches, containing an array of contrasting fabrics and colors. As an oral historian it was left to me to enable a true picture of this quilt, and of this community, to emerge from all these individual first-person accounts. By weaving together these patches with Drucker's thread, along with contextual and documentary information, and additional strands of emerging themes and deeper significances, I have created a vibrant Philharmonic Community Quilt. In order to give this tapestry a coherent design, I have concentrated on four main issues: the changing face of the orchestra, orchestral logistics, commissioning and premiering new works, and the music directors. In this manner, I have produced a richer view of how the

Philharmonic community changed over a significant 60-year-period and just what it means to be an orchestral musician in the 21st century.

Previous Philharmonic Studies

Institutional histories are a well-established genre of scholarship, and the New York Philharmonic has acquired a legacy of earlier writings. It was my hope that I could build upon these previous works, all of which served as invaluable resources for my own study. The first three books chronicling the first century of the New York Philharmonic's existence were extremely traditional histories, instigated by the orchestra's own desire to commemorate specific anniversaries, beginning with the 50th, back in 1892. Written by Henry Edward Krehbiel, a music critic for *The New York Tribune* for over 40 years, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial* is, in fact, most valuable by virtue of its age, which in some ways serves to mitigate its frequently off-putting elitist tone. Some of that effusiveness also stems from the author's intentions, as he made clear:

> The purpose of this little book…is a Memorial, written at the instance of the Board of Directors of the Philharmonic Society, and published in connection with the projected celebration of the Society's semi-centennial. I shall not aim to tell the story of the Society in all its details, but rather to put on record…the significant facts in its career…and incidentally preserve the memories of some of the men who were instrumental in its foundation, preservation, and development. The Society is to-day a living monument of the vigorous fruitfulness of the social soil into which it pushed its feeble roots half a century ago, as well as of the zeal and highmindedness of the musicians who have tilled and guarded that soil ever since.[13]

[13] Henry Edward Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial* (New York and London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1892), 9-10.

What Krehbiel, who was able to speak to three of the five surviving original members of the orchestra, considered "incidental" then, lies at the very heart of my purpose now, as I refocus on that "social soil…tilled" by the Philharmonic community.

Twenty-five years later, in 1917, James Gibbons Huneker, a music, drama, and art critic, produced *The Philharmonic Society of New York and its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospect*. After setting out a rationale to simply recycle much of the factual core of Krehbiel's work, he created his own propaganda, filled with overblown prose and heaping praise, famously asserting: "The orchestra…is the new church of an ancient and venerated religion, the religion of art. The orchestra is a commanding factor in the aesthetic life of a community….And when we say orchestra we mean The Philharmonic Orchestra of New York….The history of the Philharmonic orchestra is the history of music in America."[14] He did refer to "a community," but, again, it is an elitist one meant to exclude. There has been a need to tell the "history of the Philharmonic" *as* a community interacting with a much wider community encompassing composers, conductors, and audience members.

Moreover, in producing "…this Retrospect, skeletonized for the friends and members of The Philharmonic Society…" Huneker was clearly writing for a restricted coterie.[15] My study, by its very oral-history-based nature, is directed toward a wide readership: not only scholars, musicians, and regular concertgoers, but also, potentially, anyone who has ever been somewhat interested in (and, perhaps, intimidated by) the world of orchestral music. My work is intended to demystify what has previously been exalted by undertaking an anti-elitist examination of the Philharmonic from the inside out, rather than the top down.

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[14] James Gibbons Huneker, *The Philharmonic Society of New York and its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospect* (New York, 1917), 31-33.

[15] Ibid., 35.

Novelist John Erskine served as the first President of The Juilliard School of Music from 1928 to 1937, and, in 1943, published *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years.* Originating even more overtly from the selfsame laudatory impulses as its precursors, it presented a foreword by Marshall Field, Chairman of the Board and President, extolling: "The Philharmonic-Symphony Society in its century of providing the public with the best music and the best interpreters of that music…."[16] The book again contained much recycled material and eventually devolved into a gossip column with details of descendants of founding members. Yet, while still tailored toward an extremely limited readership, from the outset, Erskine made a perspicacious observation: "Good orchestral players are almost harder to find than soloists, for the reason that the soloist can be himself with a minimum obligation to consider others, whereas the orchestral player, in order to aid in the total effect, runs the danger of suppressing his personality."[17] Though only revealed in passing mentions, he was cognizant of the existence of a Philharmonic community: "The men who organized the Philharmonic were personal friends; the orchestra today is a large family, a society in the best sense of the word."[18] Furthermore, Erskine offered a time capsule of the ensemble Drucker would join a mere five years later: "…the players today in the range of their musicianship are astounding….They are all excellent soloists….A modern orchestra of Philharmonic-Symphony quality is a galaxy of splendidly equipped artists….[The concertmaster's] colleagues at the other first desks are…top-flight exponents of their art…[including] Simeon Bellison, clarinet…"[19]

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[16] Marshall Field, foreword to *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*, by John Erskine (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), vii.

[17] Erskine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*, 48.

[18] Ibid., 51.

[19] Ibid., 50-51.

In preserving, proliferating, and contextualizing the experiences of a range of those "splendidly equipped artists," I offer a deeper view into the Philharmonic community and how it has changed as it moved from Erskine's era into a new century. In doing so, my time frame encompasses some of the same territory as the most noteworthy and substantial Philharmonic study: Howard Shanet's *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra* from 1975. A musicologist, conductor, composer, Columbia University professor, and "the historian of the Philharmonic," Shanet undertook his work seriously, guided solely by his own scholarly interests and, accordingly, used Huneker's aforementioned 1917 quote as a jumping off point to emphasize his larger scope: "…if Huneker had taken a wider view, he could have said… 'In the history of the Philharmonic Orchestra can be seen a reflection of American life in its time.' For the Philharmonic…*has* been a cultural mirror….It is in this broad sense that I propose to examine the development of the New York Philharmonic, relating it whenever possible to the society in which it has functioned. It follows from this that I am not writing an 'official' or 'authorized' history…"[20]

Shanet clearly had a different view of "society" than his forerunners and was, therefore, finally writing for a decidedly less restricted pool of readers. He also had a markedly defined agenda, compelling him to utilize italics in his desire to "…admit at the outset…I shall have an ax to grind: *I am determined to do what I can to combat the vast, and largely unjustified, inferiority complex that has oppressed American music throughout its history, and continues to do so today*."[21] With such goals in mind, even his coverage of the Philharmonic's 19th-century origins veered in a completely new direction, revealing not only a greater awareness of a

[20] Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1975), xii.

[21] Ibid., xiii.

"society" outside that of the insular orchestral audience, but also an interest and support for homegrown composers that was previously lacking. At the same time, though, even as his book extends all the way to the 1970s, it is still a traditional chronological institutional history that fails to take into consideration the concept of the Philharmonic as a society, in and of itself, comprising individuals.

Leaving off in the interregnum before Pierre Boulez was to assume the mantle of music director, Shanet cautioned: "The Philharmonic's relationship to the community in which it functions has changed many times since those days of innocent optimism in 1842 when the launching of the Philharmonic was hailed as a 'New Musical Era in this western world.'…Today the Philharmonic is certainly closer to those ideals than it ever was. But the interested minority…is still a long way…from being 'the community' of the idealists' dreams."[22] While he comprehensively sought to examine the Philharmonic's relationship to the outside "community," I found it necessary to forge an entirely new route to address the vast changes the Philharmonic faced over my 60-year time frame. I readily acknowledge my debt to Shanet's meticulous and extensive work but, as an oral historian, I have chosen not to build upon his scholarship in a linear manner. Instead, I have already introduced Drucker, through his own words, in order to provide an accessible entrée to the greater Philharmonic Community, a range of individual voices who will surface in succeeding chapters to weave together a rich quilt underpinning the life of an orchestral musician as we continue to venture into the 21st century.

Before moving on, I must also briefly recognize John Canarina's 2010 book, *The New York Philharmonic: From Bernstein to Maazel*. A writer and critic who spent a year as Bernstein's assistant conductor at the Philharmonic, Canarina wryly summarizes, "Much has

[22] Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra*, 412.

happened since" Shanet's tome was published.[23] While I adamantly concur, his focus, and format, are substantively different than mine. As he explains, "A sub-theme of this book concerns the way the Philharmonic and its music directors have been treated by New York's critical press, the *New York Times* in particular."[24] Indeed, he has compiled a useful chronological updating of Philharmonic activities, with a particularly detailed performance history covering the past 30 years, often on a program-by-program basis, with the aforementioned emphasis on critical commentary. My efforts piecing together oral histories from the Philharmonic community in order to examine particular issues have produced a completely different kind of study.

High/Low: Bridging the Gap through Community

> From a distance, it might appear that classical music is veering toward oblivion. The situation looks especially bleak in America, where scenes from prior decades—Strauss conducting for thousands in Wanamaker's department store, Toscanini playing to millions on NBC radio, the Kennedys hosting Stravinsky at the White House—seem mythically distant. To the cynical onlooker, orchestras and opera houses are stuck in a museum culture, playing to a dwindling cohort of aging subscribers and would-be elitists who take satisfaction from technically expert if soulless renditions of Hitler's favorite works. Magazines that once put Bernstein and Britten on their covers now have time only for Bono and Beyoncé.[25]

Such malingering has become an ever more constant refrain in the years since Shanet's book was published and since Lawrence Levine, in his 1988 examination of *The Emergence of*

[23] John Canarina, *The New York Philharmonic from Bernstein to Maazel* (New York: Amadeus Press, 2010), 1.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 514.

Cultural Hierarchy in America, lamented the "loss of what [he perceived] to have been a rich shared public culture" that had since "fragmented" into "highbrow" and "lowbrow."[26] More recently, though, some scholars, journalists, educators, and other interested parties have begun to do more than bemoan an ostensibly unbridgeable divide. After offering that alliterative salvo quoted above, Alex Ross, in his 2007 book, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*, continues: "Seen from a more sympathetic angle, the picture is quite different….As the behemoth of mass culture breaks up into a melee of subcultures and niche markets, as the Internet weakens the media's stranglehold on culture distribution, there is reason to think that classical music…can find fresh audiences in far-flung places."[27] The pertinent question then becomes how best to go about finding and recruiting these newcomers.

Writing more specifically about "The Future of the Orchestra" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra* in 2003, Stephen Cottrell initially draws attention to the "…difficulties orchestras have in persuading certain sections of Western society that there is something of interest for them at an orchestral concert. The perceived 'stuffiness' of these concerts….[together] with other patterns of behavior…all generates what is often seen as a forbiddingly formal environment for those unfamiliar with such practices."[28] Yet, he also counsels that "…there is a balance to be struck between tradition and change. Some people attend orchestral concerts precisely *because* they feel comfortable with hearing music they know, under circumstances which are both familiar and comfortable."[29] He then proffers a suggestion:

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[26] Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9, 3.

[27] Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, 514-515.

[28] Stephen Cottrell, "The Future of the Orchestra" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 254.

[29] Ibid.

"While orchestras will continue to provide the major musical events which are the cornerstones of their work, they can no longer be viewed as cultural monoliths whose only raison d'être is the performance of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masterpieces. Rather, they should perhaps be seen as a resource centre, a collection of highly skilled musicians whose talents can be put to use in a variety of contexts."[30] Cottrell touches on many of the issues that form the crux of my hopes for my study, for I strongly believe that it is the very concept of "community" that can best bridge whatever gap exists between the orchestral world and its potential audience. Realistically keeping in mind that there is a wide swath of the population that may legitimately harbor absolutely no interest whatsoever in either classical music or, possibly, any musical genre, there is still a vast and yet unreached mass of prospective listeners just waiting to be tapped. For those who may contain within even the slightest sparks of curiosity about orchestral music, envisioning an "institution" as seemingly remote and august as the New York Philharmonic could easily douse such embryonic flames.

On the other hand, as an oral historian, I have undertaken a journey and been privileged to enter into the Philharmonic "community," aptly described above as "a collection of highly skilled musicians" with undeniable "talents." Through this study, I wish to extend an invitation for others to take a similar path, examining the ways in which the orchestra has changed over a 60-year period. Just as Cottrell recognized the advisability of striking a "balance…between tradition and change," I feel, in particular, that having Drucker serve, in the best sense of the term, as a tour guide, immediately helps provide a specific face for what is too often viewed as a rather inhospitable entity. In his 60 years at the New York Philharmonic, as he grew in stature, he forged a link between a succession of very different eras, and if one can begin to identify with

[30] Cottrell, "The Future of the Orchestra," 258.

this singular musician, it should be even more enlightening to follow him into the greater Philharmonic community. As Lawrence Kramer exhorts in his 2007 cogitations on *Why Classical Music Still Matters*: "…classical music lost part of its emotional transparency as the century progressed. Music that once seemed utterly available now seemed to harbor secrets….After a while, the friends of classical music began to take cultural isolation as its natural and desirable condition….What's needed…is a way to refresh listening: to reconnect the listener with a community and culture of listening…"[31] It is on that note that, over the course of the next four chapters and a concluding Epilogue, I hope readers will seize upon this chance to get better acquainted with the community that is the New York Philharmonic.

In Chapter 1, "The Changing Face of the Philharmonic," I take an in-depth look at just what it was like becoming the "first permanent female member" of the orchestra through bassist Orin O'Brien's own words. I go on to show how "being a woman" in the orchestra has changed over the years. I also address the increasing prominence of Asian musicians in the Philharmonic, particularly in relationship to how the general makeup of the community both has, and has not, changed. In Chapter 2, "Philharmonic Logistics and the Orchestral Musician," I emphasize the two significant changes that took place during the Bernstein years: the move to Lincoln Center, followed by the advent of year-round employment. In particular, I consider just how financial security forever changed the definition of "orchestral musician," while also delving into possible outlets for those musicians to express themselves as individuals, such as committee work, chamber music, and educational outreach. In Chapter 3, "Philharmonic Commissions," I offer a

[31] Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 15-16.

unique opportunity to vicariously experience the world premieres of the clarinet concertos by John Corigliano and William Bolcom. Along the way, I also take into account the interaction between composers and performers and the place of contemporary music within the Philharmonic's programming, and juxtapose different perspectives about other Philharmonic commissions. In Chapter 4, "Music Directors and the Community," I focus on how nine conductors have led the Philharmonic community. I concentrate on how Bernstein's successors have envisioned the role, settling on different priorities, and in what ways they interacted with the players. Finally, in an Epilogue, "The 21st Century Community," I consider two memorable relatively recent instances in which the Philharmonic has achieved greater prominence, reflecting upon activities surrounding September 11, 2001, and the 2008 excursion to North Korea. I then posit how the Philharmonic community can become deeply embedded in the "outside" community on a more regular basis, more satisfactorily bridging the "gap" not only between "high" and "low" but also between orchestral musician and audience member.

Chapter 1: The Changing Face of the Philharmonic

> I received a message that they were going to hold an audition at the New York Philharmonic and I would be invited to audition if I wanted to. I came down…and went to Carnegie Hall, to the Green Room, where Bruno Walter was with a committee of principal players of the Philharmonic….He said, "Play something," so I played….He sat at the piano for part of it (which I thought was unusual) where he played some of the orchestral sections. And I heard him say to one of the managerial people there that, "He'll make a very valuable member of the organization." I heard those words. Anyway, I was thanked and left. And I think a week later a letter came to my home in Brooklyn offering me a position in the orchestra….I became the Assistant First and the E-flat Clarinet, which was a pretty hot chair considering the fact that I never played the E-flat clarinet before in my life![32]

The year was 1948, and Stanley Drucker, the Brooklyn-born son of Jewish Russian immigrants, had just become, at age 19, the youngest member of the New York Philharmonic. Though a momentous occasion for Drucker, the scene, with its seemingly rather ad hoc nature, dominated by the presence of Musical Advisor Bruno Walter, was probably quite typical of a time when music directors generally reigned supreme in matters of hiring and firing. When Drucker stepped on stage, he was similarly surrounded by colleagues who much resembled the musicians one might have encountered in most of the larger American symphony orchestras:

> In my early years, they were from every European country: Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Romania, Hungary, even Britain and Scotland. They were from many, many places, and a lot of them had been in other orchestras or had been in prominent positions in Europe….It was a United Nations of sorts, where everybody dressed well. Everybody wore a tie. There was even one man that wore spats, if anybody knows what that was. I would say it was a club, like a private club….[33]
>
> Some of them had well-known personas. There were some great players….The quality of their playing was obvious from the first note….It was a *male* society, of course…with a lot of individual characters….Everybody sort of had their own sense of humor but they all

[32] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

[33] Ibid.

> had a sense of humor. They were really a collegial group because, even in spite of all the differences, they had a sort of camaraderie.[34]

Perhaps what is most interesting about Drucker's description of the New York Philharmonic is his casual use of the innocuous phrase "of course" to address the issue that lies at the heart of this chapter exploring "The Changing Face of the Philharmonic." For, in 1948, the fact that he and his colleagues comprised a solely "male society" did not strike him as even remotely unusual but, rather, self-evident. Indeed, the entrance of women into this fraternity of sorts is, by far, the most obvious change that took place during his career, one that drastically reconfigured the very nature of the Philharmonic community. This chapter will first examine the 40-year process whereby female members ceased being exceptional, as the orchestra approached gender parity. The focus will then turn to how the Philharmonic admitted an increasing number of Asian musicians, while continuing to display a frustrating lack of African-American faces.

The New York Philharmonic "Men's Club"

Although the Musicians Union had been legally compelled to admit women as early as 1903, in 1948 they still remained rarities in symphony orchestras, often opting, out of necessity, to form their own women's orchestras. Even when the harp, long deemed an "acceptably" feminine instrument, proved to be a viable backdoor entrance into co-ed ensembles, the rate of acceptance varied. While the Chicago Symphony Orchestra employed a female harpist in its inaugural season in 1892, the Philadelphia Orchestra did not include one until 1930. The string section was generally the next best route into the symphonic world for women. The San

[34] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

Francisco Symphony was particularly notable in this regard, hiring four female violinists and one cellist in 1925.[35]

Despite Drucker's matter-of-fact acceptance of his surroundings, progress had been made by 1948, albeit incrementally. According to that year's *International Musician*, the official journal of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, "seventeen of the major symphony orchestras in the United States boast one or more women members."[36] Such figures included fifteen women in the Baltimore Symphony, fourteen in St. Louis, eleven in San Francisco, ten in Los Angeles, eight in Pittsburgh, seven in Chicago, five in Philadelphia and Detroit, three in Cleveland, and one in Boston. Hope Stoddard, writing about "Women's Activities in the Field of Music" for the journal, continued:

> Before the turn of the century it was scarcely considered proper for women to take their places beside men in our orchestras….Only in the last twenty-five years have such prejudices been to some extent overcome….It has taken the last decade, with its war-time shortage of "man power"…to bring to articulateness the concept of women as individuals engaged in money-making pursuits with the same purposefulness, and for the same reasons as men—namely to develop themselves, to earn their livings…and to achieve recognition in their chosen fields.[37]

While seeming to overstate women's orchestral incursions, it was that deep-seated desire to "achieve recognition" that did keep nudging the statistics upward. By 1955, Quaintance Eaton, declaring "Women Come Into Their Own in Our Orchestras" in *Musical America*, found that

[35] Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music, Century Edition* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 2001), 118, 125, 126.

[36] Hope Stoddard, "Women's Activities in the Field of Music," *International Musician* 46, no. 12 (June 1948), 24.

[37] Ibid., 24-25.

females accounted for 18.4% of the musicians in "major symphony orchestras."[38] Nevertheless, she went on to write: "In 1953…the orchestras in Boston, New York and Minneapolis…listed [no women]. The Boston Symphony has since let down its bars to the extent of a harpist and a first flutist, while the Minneapolis Symphony now shows five feminine names on its roster, but the august New York Philharmonic-Symphony has persisted in lonely masculine exclusivity—the only orchestra in the United States with no 'woman content.'"[39]

That was the orchestra violinist Newton Mansfield joined just six years later. Born in Poland, he came to the United States in 1941 at the age of 11, became an American citizen in 1946, and eventually played with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra from 1959 to 1961. That year, he remembers:

> In our locker room we used to post all kinds of things and one day we came in and there was a big sign: there were auditions at the Philharmonic. So between the afternoon and the evening performance about seven or eight of us went to take the audition. And I was offered the job. So I went to the Philharmonic and that was it….
>
> The orchestra was totally different then. To me they looked all *ancient*, even though at that time there was a mandatory retirement age of 65, so none of them were over 65….A new member coming in was sort of adopted. The first rehearsal that I had with the orchestra, one violinist came over to me and he said, "You stick with me and I'll protect you from these barbarians." Another one came over to me and says, "I'll protect you from these fascists." And then another one came over and he says, "I'll protect you," and used a four-letter word that nobody uses. It was much more intimate. There were many more characters….At that time you had an orchestra full of characters.[40]

[38] Quaintance Eaton, "Women Come Into Their Own in Our Orchestras," *Musical America* 75, no. 4 (February 15, 1955), 30.

[39] Ibid., 30.

[40] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

With his bluntly colorful language, Mansfield's description of both his essentially "spur-of-the-moment," old-fashioned, somewhat informal audition experience, and his new working environs, hints at some of the challenges confronting female musicians seeking membership in such ensembles "full of characters."

While symphony orchestras, in theory, are institutions focused primarily on producing the most elevated performances possible, realistically, money is always a guiding force in personnel decisions. With that dictum in mind, in *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* from 2001, Christine Ammer states, "That women instrumentalists should have been excluded from conventional orchestras…is hardly surprising….A major reason for their exclusion was economic. Any post given to a woman meant one less opening for a man."[41] Perhaps even more daunting, however, was the necessity of surmounting outright male resistance on the part of not only fellow orchestra members and conductors, but even critics and journalists. In "Why Not Women in Orchestras?" from a 1952 issue of *Etude*, Raymond Paige obviously intended to both praise and encourage women, exalting: "The taboo against women in orchestras is wearing itself out. One reason for this is the general tendency toward human equality based on merit; women are making careers in all sorts of professions (including the armed forces) which, a generation ago, were not considered 'woman's sphere,' and music is falling into step with a natural trend."[42] He then admitted, "The prejudice against her is so recent that, in order to get in at all, she needs to be just as good as, even possibly a shade better, than the average man."[43] His own prejudice was revealed in his preoccupation with just what manner of performance was most befitting and appropriate for prospective female musicians, as he offered such

[41] Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music, Century Edition*, 118.

[42] Raymond Paige, "Why Not Women in Orchestras?" *Etude* 70, no. 1 (January 1952), 14.

[43] Ibid.

admonishments: "…instruments requiring physical force are a dubious choice, partly because women lack the strength for them, partly because the spectacle of a girl engaging in such physical exertions is not attractive….In general, women who want orchestral work do better to avoid anything heavier than the 'cello, the clarinet, and the French horn."[44] Just what, then, one might wonder, would he make of a female double bassist gaining admittance to the selective New York Philharmonic "men's club"?

Crashing the Philharmonic Glass Ceiling

Faced with so many different kinds of obstacles, it is not surprising that many women decided not to audition for symphony orchestras in the first place, further bolstering the rationale to exclude by enabling administrators to cite a lack of suitable female applicants for open positions. For Orin O'Brien, a female bassist from California, it was the constant early support she received that enabled her to unwittingly become a trailblazer, crashing the "glass ceiling" into the upper echelon of orchestral playing. She recalls:

> The one thing that was—dare I say—instrumental in encouraging me was my wonderful teacher…Frederick Zimmermann at The Juilliard School….He was a member of the New York Philharmonic for 36 years….He encouraged me and he *insisted* that I take the first audition I took, which was in 1956….
>
> My teacher recommended that I write a letter, which I did, saying, "Even though I am female, I would like an appointment for an audition." And they *did* give me an appointment, and I *did* play, and I played well enough so that my reputation was enhanced around town and I began getting work because of that. The word sort of spread; the committee talked about me and they said that I was a very good player. So it was a wonderful experience for me. It was not at all bad. Nobody insulted me; nobody laughed or anything….

[44] Paige, "Why Not Women in Orchestras?" 14-15.

> After I auditioned for the Philharmonic the first time, the man who won the audition was another pupil of Fred Zimmermann who was in the New York City Ballet, and he recommended me to the conductor, who knew me from the National Orchestral Association. I played a week there and the conductor liked me so I got the job. I didn't even have to audition for it. They just tried me out as they often did in those years….Things were a little bit looser then….[45]

One might ordinarily assume that O'Brien's audition for the New York Philharmonic was atypical, due to her gender, and, quite possibly, instrument as well, but it was, interestingly enough, very much in keeping with the "old boy's" system of hiring that was commonplace at that time. Not only was she not discouraged by not obtaining the position at the orchestra, but she rather easily, due to a series of connected individuals, secured a place at the New York City Ballet, where she played from 1956 to 1966, before another opportunity to audition for the New York Philharmonic presented itself:

> I saw the ad in the *International Musician*, and it says, "Please write a letter with your background." I wrote a letter and I was invited to audition….I would have been discouraged if I hadn't had a lot of encouragement from my fellow musicians. I kind of listened to them and I said, "Well, OK, I'll give it one more shot." Because by then I turned 30 in 1965 and I thought, "Gosh, if I get any older they probably won't want me."…
>
> The final audition was in the board room….I played for the entire principal strings and Leonard Bernstein and the personnel manager….It was scary because, after all, you could see Bernstein only about 15 or 20 feet away. But I thought, "I'll just screen out everything and I'll play….I *know* I'm a good professional. I know I can do the job. So just play and see what happens." I was lucky….
>
> I have to say I only wanted one thing: I wanted to be able to play classical music and I didn't care what it was, whether it was ballet or opera or

[45] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

> symphony. And I got my wish. I was one of the lucky ones….In those days you did not see many women in orchestras.[46]

O'Brien's perseverance and outgoing personality, combined with the fortitude of collegial support, had enabled her to set a historic precedent, as Music Director Leonard Bernstein appointed her "the first" woman to join the New York Philharmonic in 1966. She is quick, however, to at least partly dispute that mantle:

> I thought it was not correct because I had ushered in Carnegie Hall….from 1954 to '56, and I heard the Philharmonic play four times a week, and I knew there was a woman harpist….I thought it was really unfair of them to feature me as the first woman in the orchestra….but I think it fit into the need for publicity at the time.[47]

While such modest demeanor and willingness to blend in helped pave O'Brien's entry into her new workplace, she also astutely picks up on the blatant lack of respect granted the female harpists who had played in the Philharmonic over the years. No less an authority than Howard Shanet, in his 1975 study, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra*, merely mentions that, before O'Brien, "there had been several harpists," finding it unnecessary to go into further detail.[48] As for the matter of "publicity," Eaton had observed in 1955: "Two wars and a depression taught managers and conductors the hard way that women are first of all good players and secondly good troopers. Now a third advantage has been recognized—they are stabilizers in the community and they attract first-class publicity."[49]

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[46] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra*, 347.

[49] Eaton, "Women Come Into Their Own in Our Orchestras," 30.

Indeed, O'Brien's appointment brought with it a flurry of press activity, like this *New York Times* article heralding her arrival in September 1966:

> As the picture to the right attests, Miss O'Brien is as comely a colleen as any orchestra could wish to have in its ranks, and she happens to be the first woman to become a permanent member of the traditionally all-male orchestra. Miss O'Brien's first appearance with the orchestra at one of its park concerts this summer resulted in a management notice to the players that began "Gentlemen and Lady of the Orchestra."…The Philharmonic replied to her request for an audition with a letter that began "Dear Mr. O'Brien," but once she had set the matter straight, the fact that she was a woman was not mentioned again.[50]

That patronizing focus on appearance became an all-too-familiar trope in other periodicals, including *Time Magazine* in December 1966:

> Orin O'Brien, 31, the newest member of the New York Philharmonic, scurried into Philharmonic Hall…and, ignoring the musicians' locker room, got dressed in a washroom. It was not a hazing rite. Indeed, no rookie has ever been so warmly accepted by the orchestra; to a man they say, "Orin is one of the boys." Only Orin is one of the girls—the only girl, in fact, in the 104-member orchestra, a situation unique at the Philharmonic, so there is yet no place for her to dress. Miss O'Brien, who is as curvy as the double bass she plays, does not mind….[51]

Amidst all this hype, however, O'Brien happened to be absolutely the right person at the right place at the right time to set such a monumental precedent. Upon speaking to her, more than four decades into her Philharmonic career, it became immediately obvious that she is innately possessed with the kind of temperament to forge her way as the "first" and only woman in the orchestra: extroverted, feisty, able to let any slights go by and, above all, continually

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[50] Allen Hughes, "One Is Avant-Garde, the Other No Gentleman," *The New York Times*, September 4, 1966.

[51] *Time Magazine*, "Orchestras: Ladies' Day," December 9, 1966.

concentrate on just performing. She had already become a familiar face in the insular world of New York orchestral musicians, facilitated by having the Philharmonic's Assistant Principal Bass as a mentor, and further empowering her to enter this new orchestra with a sense of confidence. As she points out:

> Most of the people in the orchestra I already knew. Some of them…were in the New York City Ballet….
>
> I was there for ten years. I also, from 1961 to '66, worked as a substitute and extra bass at the Met….
>
> I subbed at City Opera, too. I did most of the work around New York….My teacher, Fred Zimmermann, had allowed me to go to chamber music rehearsals. He was part of a chamber music group in the orchestra and I used to go to whoever's apartment was having the rehearsals.[52]

The fact that it must have been infinitely easier to become "the first" woman at the New York Philharmonic as a "known quantity" is underscored by Drucker's memories of her appointment and arrival:

> Orin O'Brien, the first woman, her teacher was on the first desk in the bass section, Frederick Zimmermann. Everybody knew him and admired him and it was sort of natural that his star pupil would get that job….[53]
>
> It was just very easy, an easy joining. She's a very fine person: dedicated to music and to her instrument and fit in very well as a good colleague.[54]

O'Brien's background was important because, in a way, she had already been an extended member of the Philharmonic community through her teacher. In her case, then, lineage

[52] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[53] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[54] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

trumped gender, since she could simply be viewed as yet another instance of a "star pupil" inheriting a position. She likely would have been perceived as more of a threatening presence had she come into the orchestra "out of nowhere." As it was, even Drucker, who is always completely focused on the music itself, and therefore, essentially impervious to more trivial or cosmetic incidences, did admit that while it was "very normal" to have a woman in the orchestra, "it was a big novelty at the time. It was very new."[55] He elaborates:

> At that time, it was definitely unusual to see a woman in a symphony orchestra. When you think of some of the old movies, where Leopold Stokowski would be conducting 100 men. In fact, there was a film that was called *One Hundred Men and a Girl*, who was a singer. But the public perception of a symphony orchestra was a lot of old guys in tail suits with white tie. So that was really Leonard Bernstein's doing. He had the vision for what was growing and what could be. And perhaps it wouldn't have happened under somebody else. But it happened under Leonard Bernstein, which doesn't surprise me.[56]

It might very well have been more difficult if a conductor of "lesser" stature had attempted to take such a step forward after so much time. In the end, one cannot overstate the combined influence of both Zimmermann and Bernstein in helping to at least ease O'Brien's path.

Her ability to rely on her sense of humor was also a necessity, as she describes the conditions she faced backstage during her first season:

> There was no ladies' [dressing] room, though there was a women's bathroom and I changed in there because the men in the bass section, of course, changed in their locker room, which was a very small locker room. Each person had room for one bass and one locker, and I also did not want to interfere with their dressing, so I would dress in the ladies' room….

[55] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[56] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

> And I do remember my first tour with the orchestra…with Bernstein….In order to get my clothes to dress in whatever ladies' room was there, one of our bass players…told me, "Close your eyes like this and I'll take you by the hand and guide you to your trunk and you can get your stuff and then I'll guide you back to where the ladies' room is." I thought that was sweet of him. Actually, they were very protective and very kind and helpful and funny….In the Philharmonic, since there was only *one* of me, it was a little funny the first year. It was comic. It wasn't awkward. It was just comic. And everybody was very nice I would say.[57]

Despite O'Brien's naturally positive personality, tensions are always unavoidable in "new" situations, and while she does her best to skim over any unpleasantness, one can read between the lines and get a sense of the kinds of difficulties faced by "firsts":

> I knew a lot of the people in the orchestra and they were actually quite welcoming to me. There was no *bad* feeling. Although, I had understood from my teacher, in the locker rooms, when it was announced that Bernstein was going to hire a woman, there was some grumbling. There was actually a feeling at that time (also in 1956 when I got in the Ballet) that a man with a family was more worthy of being hired than a single woman….I can understand the feeling. I certainly don't resent it or mind it….Luckily for my feelings, nobody said that to me openly, but I heard about it from my teacher, and I heard about it from other friends. I felt that I was *watched*, I would say, and my behavior was monitored, but not in an uncomfortable way. And I didn't behave any differently than I would have not being watched anyway. You are who you are and I felt very accepted.[58]

Drucker, too, merely hints at some of the less positive attitudes lurking below the surface, admitting, "Anything new takes a little bit of getting used to. So I think that perhaps some of the old-timers might have been a little uncomfortable with the fact that the old boys' club was changing and it wasn't a moose lodge anymore."[59]

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[57] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

Mansfield candidly refers to the Philharmonic of that time as "a bunch of wild men….and not only the players, but Bernstein was wild too."[60] In his view, O'Brien "was our baby. She became that. Everybody treated her like a baby doll, a new thing."[61] Indeed, she often needed to wield an impressive amount of cognitive dissonance to handle displays of likely well-intentioned, but simultaneously patronizing, attention. She relates a particular instance on tour:

> Bernstein swept through the lobby….came over and said, "How do you like being in our band?" And I said, "Oh, I just love it," and so he swept on. He was kind and generous in his dealings with the orchestra and very kind to me. In fact, sometimes he would single me out at rehearsal. When we did a difficult piece and there was a solo for the fifth bass or something…and I would be counting correctly and play, he would yell out, "Bravo, Orin." And I was embarrassed. I thought that was very embarrassing to be singled out. I thought, "What will they think of me? I didn't do anything else. I just counted my part." But Bernstein was, I think, trying to show kindness to me, which was nice. In retrospect I realize he was being very fatherly, but I was embarrassed at the time. I thought, "Oh, please don't notice me, please."[62]

Though she may have been able to rationalize such behavior, and even attribute it to "kindness," it comes across as more offensive in the admittedly different orchestral world of the 21st century. Realistically, that is just the kind of condescension and slights she must have regularly confronted in her early years as the "ceiling crasher" of the New York Philharmonic. While O'Brien was obviously aware of latent prejudice, over four decades later, she is able to declare:

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[60] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

"It was never spoken about to me. Nobody ever said, 'You're not going to succeed because you're a woman.'"[63]

From Tokenism to Transition

Not all women in the 1960s were as fortunate. Cellist Evangeline Benedetti auditioned for the New York Philharmonic under distinctly different circumstances than O'Brien. In 1967, she remembers:

> The Philharmonic always advertises in the AF of M [*American Federation of Musicians*] magazine. I was living in Monsey, Indiana, and, at that time, married to a trumpet player who read the union paper more thoroughly than I did, and he saw the ad and said, "Why don't you go take the audition?" So, being a union member, I wrote, and I'd had enough experience by then to be accepted into the audition….I had not been around the circle of the Philharmonic at all so I really didn't know who anybody was….[64]

When Bernstein hired her, she felt becoming the second female member of the Philharmonic was:

> …shocking and exciting. All my male teachers were very discouraging about my even taking the audition. "They won't take a woman. Why are you even trying?" I don't know. I've always been one to, more or less, march to my own drum, so to speak, and took the audition and, of course, won. I think Orin certainly broke down the initial barrier but I came in with other sets of qualities that gave me a bunch of firsts….I was the first woman to have a baby so that broke down that taboo.[65]

[63] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[64] Evangeline Benedetti, interview by author, April 20, 2010.

[65] Ibid.

Having joined the Philharmonic as an "unknown" musician lacking the kind of extensive support system O'Brien had had, Benedetti's personality was probably even more important in her new position. Certainly no shrinking violet, she bluntly describes the backstage conditions as "not too pleasant."[66] She displays obvious pride at establishing her own precedents, becoming the first Philharmonic member to be granted maternity leave for the births of her two daughters. As she explains, though, this distinction came with a great sense of responsibility:

> The Philharmonic's always been a good employer, as far as things go, but I was personally very worried that if I took too long, that other women would not be able to or they would be discouraged from hiring women. That really did bother me. So I played up until two weeks before each child was born and I came back to work after six weeks. Even then I was told to do whatever my doctor thought was appropriate, but sizable maternity leaves, even in the regular culture, were not the norm….So I went on tour when my daughter…was six months old. I was just really afraid not to upset the apple cart any more than was necessary as far as the normal behavior of members of the orchestra. Again, so that other women would have an opportunity, and the management would not be discouraged from hiring them because *I* had been out too long.[67]

Such heretofore nonexistent considerations would arise again as the Philharmonic community continued to experience some of the same changes that were taking place in the "outside" world at that time, as women began to not only enter the workforce in greater numbers, but also to branch out into more diverse fields. In *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations*, published in 1990, Barbara F. Reskin and Patricia A. Roos emphasize: "Beginning in the late 1960s another 'revolution'—the women's liberation movement—promised to improve women's position in the workplace….Thus, the 1970s represented a watershed for sex segregation. For the first time in this century women made

[66] Evangeline Benedetti, interview by author, April 20, 2010.

[67] Ibid.

notable gains in some occupations in which men had typically predominated."[68] As to motivation, Reskin and Roos contend, "a publicly endorsed notion of entitlement to equal opportunity, combined with media attention to women pioneers in men's jobs, gave women permission to aspire to occupations formerly off limits to them."[69] Indeed, the very kind of publicity bestowed upon O'Brien's historic appointment continued to chronicle the Philharmonic's slowly growing female contingent. Unfortunately, while the numbers did gradually change, some prevailing preoccupations and prejudices did not. By 1971, there were four women in the orchestra, but in a *New York Times* profile by Judy Klemesrud, "Is Women's Lib Coming to the Philharmonic?" the prose takes a familiar turn, describing, "Orin O'Brien, 35, a tall and slender bassist….single and considered the orchestra's 'glamour girl,'" and "Mrs. Benedetti, who has blue eyes and the face of a cherub…"[70] Ironically, while willing to write such trivial blather, that same reporter had covered a more serious issue still hampering women's progress in orchestras in a 1970 *New York Times* article, "Mehta's Mystique: Baton In Hand, Foot in Mouth?":

> There are signs that the…conductor…is a foe of women's liberation….And even though the Los Angeles Philharmonic has 16 women members, [Music Director Zubin] Mehta really doesn't think they belong there. "They are very good—they got their jobs in competition with men," he says. "I just don't think women should be in an orchestra. They become men. Men treat them as equals; they even change their pants in front of them. I think it's terrible!"[71]

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[68] Barbara F. Reskin and Patricia A. Roos, *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 6.

[69] Ibid., 304.

[70] Judy Klemesrud, "Is Women's Lib Coming to the Philharmonic?" *The New York Times*, April 11, 1971.

[71] Judy Klemesrud, "Mehta's Mystique: Baton In Hand, Foot in Mouth?" *The New York Times*, October 18, 1970.

Paradoxically, combatting such male resistance, from conductors and players alike, actually became even more of an issue as the number of women increased. According to Benedetti, when two more women joined the Philharmonic in 1970:

> That was fine. It was nice to have them….*But* when a bigger number like 10, 12, or something joined, then I think some overt anti-feminism was going on because the men, at that point, felt threatened (that's my interpretation of it) that more women would be there, and, of course, it's become the case.[72]

In her astute summation, Benedetti offers a case study exemplifying two of the three stages of the gender recomposition process delineated by Jutta Allmendinger, J. Richard Hackman, and Erin V. Lehman in "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras" in 1996. In the first stage, with "token female representation," comprising no more than ten percent of the orchestra, "many women find that there are strong incentives for them to keep a low profile, to comply with existing orchestral norms, and generally to be as nonintrusive as possible."[73] Thus, O'Brien's strong desire to simply blend into her section and not call attention to herself. As the proportion of women expands from ten to forty percent, and the ensemble can be considered "in transition," "organizational life for both female and male members takes a qualitative turn for the worse….[As] women become both more numerous and more powerful, men can no longer ignore the threat that women pose to their occupational status and to their control of their orchestras."[74] Further bolstering Benedetti's view, Mansfield plainly states that, as more women joined the Philharmonic, "The transition was smooth up to a point where we had to begin to

[72] Evangeline Benedetti, interview by author, April 20, 2010.

[73] Jutta Allmendinger, J. Richard Hackman, and Erin V. Lehman, "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (Summer 1996), 211.

[74] Ibid.

change dressing rooms in order to make more bathrooms, and, at that point, it became a little more meaningful."[75]

The Next Generations

In any new venture, pioneers eventually give way to succeeding generations. As the Philharmonic gained more female members, and priorities and concerns shifted, the very definition of "being a woman" in the orchestra changed as well. Some of those changes can be directly attributed to changes in orchestral audition policies that took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Significantly, when thinking back to her 1979 audition for the New York Philharmonic, violinist Yoko Takebe immediately responds: "I remember playing behind the screen in a little room."[76] With her presence obscured, unlike the auditions undertaken by O'Brien and Benedetti, there was no way for the adjudicators to be influenced by Takebe's gender, as they were compelled to form opinions based purely on what they could hear. As Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse explain in their 2000 study, "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of 'Blind' Auditions on Female Musicians," "blind" auditions, using screens, were "adopted to ensure, or at least give the impression of, impartiality," generally in the first, or preliminary, round of auditions.[77] According to their extensive research, "blind auditions increased the likelihood a female would be hired by 25 percent."[78] They then concluded:

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[75] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[76] Yoko Takebe, interview by author, June 9, 2010.

[77] Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse, "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of 'Blind' Auditions on Female Musicians," *The American Economic Review* 90, no. 4 (September 2000), 716.

[78] Ibid., 736.

> A strong presumption exists that discrimination has limited the employment of female musicians, especially by the great symphony orchestras. Not only were their numbers extremely low until the 1970's, but many music directors, ultimately in charge of hiring new musicians, publicly disclosed their belief that female players had lower musical talent. The question is whether hard evidence can support an impact of discrimination on hiring. Our analysis…indicates that it can….[79]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, even in this supposedly new world of fairer auditions, remnants of the "good 'ole boy's network" lingered. When bassoonist Judith LeClair initially attempted to try-out for the New York Philharmonic in 1980, she was informed she was "too young to audition," and was only reinstated due to the influence of her teacher.[80] Through some old-fashioned string-pulling, then, she was able crash through yet another glass ceiling, as announced in *The New York Times* article, "Miss LeClair to Hold a First Chair in Philharmonic":

> For only the second time in the 139-year history of the New York Philharmonic, a woman has been selected for one of its musical chairs. The orchestra's conductor, Zubin Mehta, designated Judith LeClair…as first-chair bassoonist….Jack Murphy, a Philharmonic spokesman, said the first woman to perform as a principal with the orchestra played in 1957 on the harp, an instrument traditionally played by women. Of Miss LeClair, Mr. Murphy reported, "Zubin Mehta said she was one of the finest talents he had heard in the last decade."[81]

Though it is certainly ironic to read such encomiums attributed to the same conductor who had so denigrated female musicians only ten years prior, it is even more ironic that, by that time, gender was simply not among LeClair's preoccupations. She clarifies:

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[79] Goldin and Rouse, "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of 'Blind' Auditions on Female Musicians," 737.

[80] Judith LeClair, interview by author, May 13, 2010.

[81] Judith Cummings, "Notes on People," *The New York Times*, October 20, 1980.

> I never really thought about the woman thing. I know it was a breakthrough, but I was more concerned with just proving myself as a player. I didn't have to prove myself as being a woman. I wanted to just prove myself: everybody thinking, "Oh, well, she's only 23. She'll never be able to handle this job." So all I did was just put my nose to the grindstone, and practice, and make reeds, and learn this music, so that I wanted to make sure that I was prepared every rehearsal. I didn't really think about the other part of it.[82]

While others, including Benedetti, may have viewed her as another path-blazer, she was more focused on thwarting any misconceptions about lack of ability stemming from her relative youth rather than gender. Yet, even as some issues began to fade, she was still faced with dilemmas resulting from the decision to start a family. Although she describes the Philharmonic's maternity policies as "excellent," she then qualifies that statement:

> I had gotten one residency off afterwards. (That was in Europe.) I think that *now* it's even better because a lot of the ladies don't have to go on tour for the first year afterwards and that didn't happen [then]. I wish, because I would have loved it. It was very difficult to go on tour when my son was young. Oh, it was just excruciating to leave him and now they're not doing that. But it was also hard for me, as a principal player, to just say, "I'm not going." So *that* was difficult.[83]

LeClair's sense of obligation to the New York Philharmonic, particularly stemming from her leadership role, reveals the continuing tensions felt by Benedetti, and other working mothers, in general. According to Alice Kessler-Harris in her 2003 book, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, "Between 1970 and 2000, women entered the labor force at twice the rate of men with mothers of small children in the vanguard."[84] New issues arising from

[82] Judith LeClair, interview by author, May 13, 2010.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 325.

such changes included questions like, "Would women engineer a revolution in the labor market, reshaping it into more family friendly configurations?" and "a series of difficult choices about whether women could in fact 'have it all.'"[85]

As LeClair indicated, the work ethic shared by the Philharmonic's first mothers did result in better conditions for those who followed, like Principal Viola Cynthia Phelps. In 1992, while still Principal in the Minnesota Orchestra and contemplating the factors involved in auditioning for a new position, Phelps gave a great deal more thought to location, specifically the possibly intimidating stereotypes about "New York," than any consideration at all of gender. She explains:

> Coming from Minnesota, the Midwest, I've learned that cities really reflect players' attitudes. And I think I was very *scared* to come to New York. I grew up in California…I think that I was just a little apprehensive about moving to a part of the country that was so unfamiliar to me. Having said that, I really felt welcomed. Not for a minute did I feel the people weren't enjoying themselves and the music that they were making, that they weren't committed. In fact it was the opposite, and I found that being female didn't matter, or my age—as long as I had experience I think.[86]

She goes on to define her role in the Philharmonic community as: "…obviously a leadership position. I have to be super-prepared for everything I do. I have to lead without a qualm. I have to make decisions quickly. I have to be a strong personality, something that people can feel strong standing behind."[87]

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[85] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, 326.

[86] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

[87] Ibid.

Unfortunately, while Phelps was able to put aside thoughts of gender and concentrate on the inherent demands of her job, she was the subject of the very same kind of portrayal as O'Brien nearly 30 years earlier. Though James R. Oestreich, writing for *The New York Times* in 1994, credited her with "superb musicianship and…leadership qualities," he dwelled upon other, less essential, details as well, asserting: "Cynthia Phelps does not exactly blend into the background: not at the New York Philharmonic, where, as principal violist, she sits up front…her alert bearing and model posture enhancing the effect of her striking looks."[88]

Despite such lingering remnants from the 1960s, the community into which Phelps so prominently entered was far removed from the "men's club" into which O'Brien had ventured. As the first principal player appointed by new Music Director Kurt Masur, she joined an orchestra that, heaping irony upon irony, had been fundamentally transformed by Mehta during his thirteen years as music director. In fact, as his tenure neared its end in 1990, he was saluted in the hagiographic *New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years*:

> Since 1978, Zubin Mehta has brought 42 new musicians to the Philharmonic. This total, which represents more than one-third the Orchestra's present membership, includes twelve principal players. There are 27 women Orchestra members, or more than 25 percent of the total membership—substantially the highest percentage of women musicians in any major U.S. orchestra. Of this total, 18 women were brought into the Philharmonic by Mr. Mehta.[89]

Thus, while still in what Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman define as the "transition" stage, the Philharmonic had made relatively rapid progress in gender recomposition in the 1980s, and

[88] James R. Oestreich, "Offstage With: Cynthia Phelps; Playing the Tune and Calling It, Too," *The New York Times*, March 31, 1994.

[89] *New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years, A Tribute to Zubin Mehta*, (New York: Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, Inc., 1990), 22.

the environment had changed accordingly.[90] Not only, for instance, does Phelps, the mother of two daughters and one stepdaughter, describe the orchestra's maternity policies as "really terrific," she enthuses:

> They are so, so supportive of family needs. It really makes it a great nurturing environment that there is care and understanding and commitment. And it's not just with having a child and having those first couple of months off. It's also if you lose a family member, if a family member is ill. There's tremendous compassion and care….I've had instances where…our youngest daughter was sick….and I called our personnel manager and said, "Look, I either miss rehearsal or I bring her and she sits in your office," and he said, "Well, bring her in Phelps."…Because it's sort of a big family, there's really a lot of nurturing and understanding for people's personal families.[91]

It is obvious that Phelps views the Philharmonic as an extremely "family-friendly" environment, and her experiences provide a distinct contrast from what Takebe remembers from her days as the mother of two young children. When she joined the Philharmonic in 1979, her husband, Michael Gilbert, was also a violinist in the orchestra, and she recalls:

> We had children already, and in the rehearsals, concerts sometimes, we would bring them, but we were *really* careful not to have them just mingle in or run around. Now it's *so* different. People bring babies, children, on the tour and, in the hall, sometimes they're just all over. We were *really* careful: "Just stay here, don't go in there, don't run." It's a change for the nicer I think, but a very, very different time.[92]

Takebe felt the strains of attempting to balance the demands on her as both a woman and a professional musician, and, just like LeClair, is gratified that others have been able to benefit

[90] Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman, "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras," 211.

[91] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

[92] Yoko Takebe, interview by author, June 9, 2010.

from improved conditions. At the same time, though, Phelps swiftly emphasizes that the focus does remain on the job at hand; even though the community has changed, the music still comes first. As far as touring, she cautions:

> We have to do what we have to do, and if you bring your family members along, sometimes it's hard for members of the orchestra that choose not to have kids. So when people do bring their children, or they bring their parents, there has evolved a set of rules….because, in the end, we have to get out there onstage.[93]

The Ceiling Cracks Further

In January 1999, Anthony Tommasini reported in *The New York Times*:

> In September, Sheryl Staples…was appointed principal associate concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic. Previously she had been associate concertmaster with the Cleveland Orchestra, a post she earned when she was just 26. Like many instrumentalists in major orchestras today, Ms. Staples has also pursued a solo career, having played concertos with some 40 orchestras nationwide. On Saturday…she added the Philharmonic to the list….And her impressive performance said much about the current high level of competition for jobs with major orchestras and the depth of talent within their ranks….The Philharmonic clearly has a strong new musician in a crucial position.[94]

Perhaps what is most notable in that paragraph is what is missing: there is no attention paid to appearance, no mention of the fact that a woman was now filling the prestigious concertmaster chair of a major symphony orchestra on a regular basis. Indeed, Staples, somewhat modestly,

[93] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

[94] Anthony Tommasini, "Philharmonic Violinist Steps Forth as Soloist," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1999.

does not even view herself as necessarily the orchestra's "*most* prominent female member."[95] Clearly part of a new generation, the mother of two young children describes belonging to an orchestra that has "really changed," continuing:

> It has significantly changed. We are almost the majority. We're getting close to crossing over that 50% boundary, and when we have auditions, particularly in the strings, there are many, many, many more women applying for these positions now than men. So there *is* no stigma at this point….I really think that if there was a time when it was difficult for women to be taken seriously and to win these positions, that really is a thing of the past. We all feel very comfortable. We feel like equal members of the orchestra.
>
> I certainly am very proud to have the position that I have. And it's life as usual for me. I was lucky that I came into the business at a time when that was already significantly changing, so I've never really felt like I had to be self-conscious about being a woman in a leadership position. That being said….I am aware of how I present myself. For anybody in a leadership position, for most of us anyway, it's important to look the role as well as performing in the role. And the way we communicate with our colleagues is very important as well. I have the utmost respect for all my colleagues, and I hope that they realize that, and I try to make sure that they do when I have the opportunity, or when it's necessary for me to address either my section or the orchestra at large.[96]

The Philharmonic over which Staples was appointed to help preside bore no resemblance to the "male society" Drucker joined in 1948 and, in fact, was nearly just as far removed from the community O'Brien had, under so much scrutiny, become a member of in 1966. According to the figures in their 2000 study on "blind" auditions, Goldin and Rouse found that: "The percentage female in the [New York Philharmonic] is currently 35 percent, the highest among all

[95] Sheryl Staples, interview by author, April 13, 2010.

[96] Ibid.

11 orchestras in our sample after being the lowest (generally at zero) for decades….Since the early 1980's the share female among new hires has been about…50 percent…."[97]

Even more impressively, as Staples already discerned, in 2005, Daniel J. Wakin reported in *The New York Times* "a little-noted phenomenon: women have come to dominate the violin sections of some of America's leading orchestras," as in the New York Philharmonic, where "women outnumber men in its violin section by 20 to 13," and also "count for 7 of the 12 violists, 6 of 11 cellists and 2 of 9 double bass players."[98] Having been a member of the Philharmonic's first violin section for over 45 years, Mansfield points out that, "All of a sudden we found out we were getting only women," and now laughingly admits to feeling "completely outnumbered."[99] Though it is true that the orchestra's sectional representation may have been heavily skewed, with no women at all among the brass or percussion, trombonist David Finlayson, who joined the Philharmonic in 1985, realistically accounts for the relative scarcity of female brass orchestral players in general, theorizing:

> It takes, especially trombone, physically, that you have to be of a physical size to play the instrument, to reach the outer positions and that kind of thing. Even for me, I'm a relatively short man and, to get out to the outer positions, it's more difficult than some of the taller guys. So I imagine if you were starting an instrument at 11, 12, 13, 14 years old, and you're a young girl, it's going to be difficult for you to play a larger instrument, physically to handle. It would be easier to play a clarinet or flute or piccolo, the more traditional instruments they pick up.
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> It has been wonderful that more women have reached out to play these bigger instruments. There's a female tuba player in Philadelphia [Carol

[97] Goldin and Rouse, "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of 'Blind' Auditions on Female Musicians," 717.

[98] Daniel J. Wakin, "In Violin Sections, Women Make Their Presence Heard," *The New York Times*, July 23, 2005.

[99] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

> Jantsch, principal since 2006]. She's the first to hold that position in a "Major Five." And more and more horn players, of course. But, again, to play French horn, you don't have to be really a big person to do it, female or male….There have certainly been more female trumpet players over the years. So I think there's a direct correlation in your physical development to how many people choose an instrument. I think that's one reason why we don't see as many, but there certainly are more now, so that stigma is passing. Young women are reaching out to want to play those less traditional instruments, which is great.[100]

Finlayson's practical, yet encouraging, summation is a far cry from Raymond Paige's 1952 *Etude* article, in which he opined: "There are women who play the heavier brasses…but their employment chances are slimmer. The orchestral manager, thinking in terms of full audience enjoyment, is reluctant to hire a player whose appearance at her instrument gives off a feeling of forcing or of incongruity."[101]

While there are still obviously new paths to be forged for women within the Philharmonic, by 2008 the orchestra was, more importantly, entering the third stage of gender recomposition outlined by Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman: "relatively gender balanced," in which female musicians range from 40 to 60 percent of an orchestra's roster.[102] When such a milestone is achieved, "all members have plenty of people like themselves with whom to compare themselves and from whom to seek support. Moreover, members of both gender groups are likely to feel fully legitimate in the organization—neither closely scrutinized nor especially threatened."[103] Though it may have taken four decades, the Philharmonic community had

[100] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

[101] Paige, "Why Not Women in Orchestras?" 14-15.

[102] Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman, "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras," 211.

[103] Ibid., 212.

evolved from an environment where O'Brien felt she "was *watched*,"[104] to one where Staples could confidently proclaim, "We all feel very comfortable. We feel like equal members of the orchestra."[105]

New York City: A "Gorgeous Mosaic"

> When I joined the orchestra way back in 1948, it was all male. Most orchestras were all male. And most of them were born in Europe. Every European country was represented. Now the evolution of the orchestral membership has changed to where many of the people in orchestras are Asian, and many are female. It evolved from the training and the talent. And I would say, from the numbers of people taking auditions, there is great emphasis in Asian countries on classical music and instrumental music in particular: strings, definitely, in *extra* particular. So there are a lot of great young players coming out of the Asian countries and not so many coming out of other countries where, in the past, they seemed to predominate. All it means is that the best players, hopefully, win the auditions, no matter where they come from. But definitely the demographics have changed in orchestras: worldwide, not just here in New York.[106]

In comparing the New York Philharmonic he joined at the beginning of his career with the one he left six decades later, Drucker acknowledges that the Philharmonic community is but a subset of the larger orchestral community, subject to many of the same general trends. The changing makeup of the Philharmonic offers insight into the way the orchestra has been shaped and reshaped by the changing waves of immigration that have proved particularly resonant in New York, the city most inextricably connected with any discussion of immigration in the United States. In their 1995 book, *In All the Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial*

[104] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[105] Sheryl Staples, interview by author, April 13, 2010.

[106] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

History of New York City, Frederick M. Binder and David M. Reimers provide the concrete figures to underscore Drucker's point: "In 1940 persons of European origin accounted for almost 95 percent of the residents. By 1990 they made up less than half that figure."[107] While they also declaim that, "Spokespersons like former Mayor David Dinkins have often praised the city's 'gorgeous mosaic,'" the "changing face" of the Philharmonic reveals an orchestra that is, in some ways, reflective of its hometown, and, in at least one particularly glaring respect, still quite set apart.[108]

In *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, published in 2000, Nancy Foner describes New York as "the quintessential immigrant city," and proceeds to delve into a comparison of those who came to this city around the turn of the 20th century and those who arrived during the waning years of that century.[109] The "old" immigrants, who settled here between 1880 and 1920, were predominantly Russian Jews and Italians.[110] Thus, as the Brooklyn-born son of Russian immigrants, Drucker's background was very much representative of New York itself when he joined the Philharmonic in 1948. In fact, as Roger Daniels notes in his 2002 book, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, patterns that had remained stable since the establishment of the "racist and discriminatory" Immigration Act of 1924 did not begin to significantly change until the passage of the less

[107] Frederick M. Binder and David M. Reimers, *All the Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 226.

[108] Ibid., 261.

[109] Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 5.

[110] Ibid., 6.

restrictive Immigration Act of 1965.[111] According to Foner, the most remarkable feature of this "new" wave of immigrants in the years since, is that, "Today no two…groups dominate New York that way, and most immigrants come not from Europe but from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Never before has the United States received newcomers from so many different countries—all of which seem to be represented in New York."[112]

In this new, significantly more diverse world of immigration, certain facets held particular resonance for both the Philharmonic community and the greater orchestral community to which Drucker alluded. As Daniels discerns:

> In the years since the end of World War II, and especially since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, no aggregate group has benefited more from the changes in American immigration law than have Asian Americans….[They] also were beneficiaries of the general trend toward a more egalitarian society, at least in terms of race and ethnicity, that peaked in the mid-1960s….The belated admission of Hawaii to statehood in 1959 has meant the presence of Asian American senators and representatives providing political clout in Washington….In demographic terms the growth of Asian American population has been startling.[113]

Indeed, in 1961, five years before he appointed the first female member of the New York Philharmonic, Bernstein selected Seiji Ozawa, from Japan, as one of his three assistant conductors; two female Asian violinists eventually joined the orchestra in 1977 and 1979. In order to address the increasing prominence of Asians within the Philharmonic over the next three decades, I was able to speak with members who represent three different generations, with extremely different perspectives on what their backgrounds mean to them.

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[111] Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd ed (Princeton, NJ: Visual Education Corporation, 2002), 328.

[112] Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, 10.

[113] Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 350.

The First Generation

Yoko Takebe was born in Japan and trained at the Toho School of Music in Tokyo. She explains her decision to come to the United States quite simply:

> I came at age 18 because I wanted to study with Ivan Galamian, who was one of the most prominent teachers here….From Japan, I sent him a tape of my playing and he told me to come to Juilliard (and apply of course). Even though it was not said, it was more or less kind of an assurance that he will take me as a result of the tape because it was a long distance just to come to audition.[114]

Earlier in this chapter, Takebe is discussed regarding the difficulties she faced balancing her role as mother of two young children with her own responsibilities as a member of the violin section. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, upon joining the orchestra in 1979, she was more concerned with gender issues than the fact that she was only the second Asian member of the Philharmonic. Remembering that, "at that time there were just a countable number of women," she goes on to emphasize:

> Actually, frankly, there was nothing so special about being Asian musicians. More, in my particular case, what was more a big point was that I was a spouse, and I think I was the first spouse to get into the orchestra *as* a spouse. (Before me, there may have been a couple who married after they were in the orchestra.) So that was more the point. I didn't particularly think about being an Asian at the time….
>
> It was a different time when I joined because, first of all, many of the men, the members, they were not used to it, and even certain members, I think, were opposed to having a spouse. I was aware of that, so I was a little bit apologetic just in even being here. And also, like on the tour, we would have two per diems, so there were certain financial advantages on the tour, and we shared a room, that kind of thing. So we were both careful not to make that so obvious.[115]

[114] Yoko Takebe, interview by author, June 9, 2010.

[115] Ibid.

For Takebe, the most salient feature of her identity as a new member of the Philharmonic was her gender and the awkwardness arising from her status as the wife of an already established colleague. Her description of the men as not being "used to" the presence of a spouse, or, perhaps, even women in general, and the sense of hostility she perceived, aptly exemplify the strains delineated in Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman's definition of an orchestra "in transition."[116] While she felt forced to display an unassuming demeanor, so as to be sure not to call any further attention to herself, her concerns were obviously enmeshed with her need to juggle her obligations as musician, wife, and mother, rendering any label of "Asian musician" immaterial.

Takebe's experiences draw attention to the fact that, while the admittance of women into the previously all-male Philharmonic represented the kind of significant social change that both fundamentally and logistically reconfigured the community over a period of stages, the entrance of Asians into the orchestra was, at least in some respects, purely cosmetic. No further backstage facilities were required and no additional contractual issues, like maternity leave, needed to be negotiated. Indeed, when Takebe made her Philharmonic solo debut alongside Myung-Hi Kim (who had become the orchestra's first Asian member in 1977), Marina Krugilov, and Carol Webb, with Mehta conducting Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins in B minor in 1983, Donal Henahan noted in *The New York Times*:

> …someone had the nice idea of calling on a quartet of the Philharmonic's female violinists. That was wonderfully apt casting, since Vivaldi wrote most of his works…for orphan girls….Besides giving a buoyant and well-coordinated performance of the Vivaldi, they reminded us by their concerted appearance how the makeup of the Philharmonic has shifted in

[116] Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman, "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras," 211.

> recent years. In 1967 there was one woman member; now there are 18, by my quick count.[117]

While acknowledging the progress women had made in the orchestra, and also offering a favorable appraisal of their efforts, he saw no reason to point out the "Asian" backgrounds of half of the soloists. As Takebe would surely agree, any such mention would have been superfluous.

Of course, just because Takebe says she gave no thought to "being Asian," that should not be interpreted to mean that no Asian musicians ever felt any sense of prejudice, or at the very least, difference. As Harry H.L. Kitano and Roger Daniels state in *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities*: "In the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century [Asian Americans] were pariahs, excluded from meaningful participation in American society, viewed as racially and culturally inferior…."[118] They attribute changing immigration laws with helping to ameliorate such views so that, "By the early 1980s, the American media were noticing the great success of many Asian Americans….The catch phrase 'Model Minority,' has an interesting history. Coined in 1966 by sociologist William Peterson, who at first applied it only to Japanese Americans, it has become the new stereotype."[119] There is also that continuation of the hallowed history of immigrants "making good" in the United States that, in particular, connects these "new" Asian musicians with the "old" Jewish musicians like Drucker and Mansfield. As Foner explains, "At the turn of the century, Jews and Italians were seen as belonging to different races—and one of

[117] Donal Henahan, "Philharmonic: Members Only," *The New York Times*, May 7, 1983.

[118] Harry H.L. Kitano and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2001), 1.

[119] Ibid., 51.

the current groups, Asians, is undergoing a contemporary metamorphosis."[120] Thus, while those early European immigrants gradually came to be viewed as "fully and unquestionably white….Asians may well be the present-day in-between peoples. Neither black nor white, they appear to be moving closer to whites in the racial hierarchy….[They] have become the 'whitest' of the nonwhite groups."[121]

More specifically, in her 2007 examination of *Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*, Mari Yoshihara perceives that:

> Many musicians pointed out the significance of music for immigrants in the United States and drew a connection between Jewish immigrants of the preceding generation and Asians and Asian Americans today. Because Jews were excluded from many occupations in the early twentieth century, music became one of the few avenues open for them to advance in American society and assimilate into the mainstream culture. Likewise, for Asian immigrants with limited language skills and social capital, music serves as a tool for assimilation into and acceptance by American society. Classical music is particularly useful in this respect because it is a form of Western high culture and Asians' accomplishment in that field presumably proves their embrace and mastery of Western culture.[122]

It logically follows that Drucker, as a first-generation American, would emphasize the basic importance of the "best players" obtaining orchestral positions, regardless of "where they come from,"[123] and that Mansfield, who had himself been born in Poland, would assert that Asians joining his section "made no impact really."[124]

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[120] Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, 143.

[121] Ibid., 149-50, 167.

[122] Mari Yoshihara, *Musicians From a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 147.

[123] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

[124] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

The Next Generation: China Enters the Picture

> The success of East Asians in classical music might seem unremarkable in the context of their general socioeconomic attainment in the United States….Yet, consider that classical music is usually regarded as a form of quintessential white European culture….[It] was only in the 1960s that a significant number of Asians came to the United States to study music. Within a single generation, musicians from Japan, followed by those from South Korea, mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan…quickly made their presence known to American—and world—audiences.[125]

In keeping with that timeline set out by Yoshihara, the next generation of Asian musicians in the New York Philharmonic can be demarcated by the arrival of the orchestra's first Chinese member, cellist Qiang Tu, in 1995. His descriptions of his early training and career personify Foner's assertion that "a major reason many Chinese leave their homeland is the unpredictable and rigid communist system and the limits on freedom and advancement."[126] Tu's first teacher was his father, who had been Principal Cello for the China Broadcasting Symphony until he was "sent to the farm to plant vegetables" during the Cultural Revolution.[127] When he returned:

> He saw both me and my elder sister did not get enough education from school, from anywhere. So he thought he needed to do something for both of us. So that's how we started the cello….When I was 13, my dad…wanted to find me a job….I got a job in the orchestra as a soloist there for a little bit over two years….Then China, the government, changed the policy. Everyone could attend college if you qualified. If you passed the exam you could go to the college, not like before. So then at year 16 I went to college, Central Conservatory….I was kept in Central Conservatory as a teacher there for another two years. After I did my duty

[125] Yoshihara, *Musicians From a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*, 3.

[126] Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, 26.

[127] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

> for two years, I requested to continue my education, to come study in the United States.[128]

Tu offers glimpses into a completely different system, and one can only imagine what kind of reorientation he experienced upon coming to this country in 1987, earning a master's degree from Rutgers University, and winning a position in the New York Philharmonic in 1995. Upon speaking to him, it quickly became evident that he was aided by his affability, persistence, resilience, and dedication to excellence and the music. He reveals a sense of awe at joining the Philharmonic, pronouncing:

> First of all, I was just so happy. I still remember my very first time in rehearsal. Because I feel like everyone on that stage is a star, is a movie star, is a pop star, a classical music star. Because, before, I only see these musicians on TV, never see them, sit so close to all of them. And when Kurt Masur had the first downbeat, there was the sound: *amazing* sound. To this moment, I'm still thinking the New York Philharmonic, it had the best sound among all the great orchestras. Myself, I didn't feel any special being the first Chinese musician in the Philharmonic. I just feel like I'm just one of the musicians. With these great musicians together, I want to do the best as everyone else can do. But I know being the first Asian male Chinese guy as a musician, it wasn't so easy sometimes. But I don't want to go through those things. It's okay. I went through.[129]

Much like O'Brien, thirty years earlier, Tu chooses to emphasize the positive, stressing his great pride at being part of the Philharmonic, and modestly declining to see himself as "special." Yet, there is a wealth of significance in that he eventually does at least hint at how difficult it must have been for him. As he is tactfully circumspect, one is again left to ponder what kind of possible sense of alienation, isolation, or difference he may have felt, and just what he "went through." Furthermore, in pointing out that he was the "first Asian male Chinese," he provides

[128] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

[129] Ibid.

evidence of a vastly different kind of preoccupation with gender than Takebe's concerns. Yoshihara sheds light on the basis of Tu's statement: "Many Asian musicians have to negotiate the gender and sexual norms of Asian cultures and families in addition to those of the Western society in which they live and work….For men, the professional pursuit of classical music itself is often a transgression of middle-class gender norms."[130] Thus, Tu's sense of accomplishment at having achieved membership in the very orchestra he had once viewed only onscreen, was evidently mingled with the more prosaic necessity of handling, possibly, both internal and external stigma or prejudice.

Having experienced the repressive effects of China's Cultural Revolution, and working so diligently to overcome any and all obstacles in his own musical endeavors, Tu is now able to take satisfaction in the great success of the Asian musicians who have joined him in the Philharmonic in more recent years, remarking: "I'm happy to see more Chinese musicians in the orchestra. I think most of the Chinese musicians worked *really* hard and it showed that they achieved something. And they worked hard. They deserved to have a good job."[131] Much as Takebe and LeClair are now able to approvingly note how maternity and family policies have made motherhood easier for those who have followed them, Tu can hopefully feel that the sometimes challenging path he trod contributed to creating a more cordial environment for his continually growing contingent of new colleagues.

[130] Yoshihara, *Musicians From a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*, 129.

[131] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

The New 21st Century Generation

> Yo-Yo Ma. Seiji Ozawa. Zubin Mehta. Midori. Sarah Chang. Tan Dun. Lang Lang. These musicians are well known not only among classical music fans but also in America's cultural landscape at large. In addition to the star status of these solo performers, conductors, and composers, Asian musicians have gained visibility as members of professional orchestras across the United States. Six of the nine new musicians who joined the New York Philharmonic in 2006 were Asian (all but one of those six were female string players); as a result, approximately one-fifth of the members of the New York Philharmonic are now Asian. Xian Zhang, its associate conductor since 2005, is a Chinese woman. Some of the other top-level American orchestras, such as the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra…have Asian concertmasters or associate concertmasters.[132]

That one New York Philharmonic musician, singled out by Yoshihara due to both gender and instrument, became somewhat of a media sensation, viewed as an embodiment of the surging rise of a new powerhouse within the classical music world. In "Increasingly in the West, the Players Are From the East," the second article of a three-part series published in *The New York Times* in April 2007, Wakin reported:

> For several decades Japanese and Korean musicians have formed a major presence in the West. In particular they have long populated the string sections of professional orchestras. Chinese musicians have now joined them in force and are winning high-profile positions….And not only string players: Liang Wang, 26, was recently named principal oboist of the New York Philharmonic, one of the most prestigious chairs in orchestral music.[133]

While attending the Beijing Central Conservatory, Wang was offered a scholarship to come to the United States in 1995, the same year Tu joined the New York Philharmonic. He describes a

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[132] Yoshihara, *Musicians From a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*, 2.

[133] Daniel J. Wakin, "Increasingly in the West, the Players Are From the East," *The New York Times*, April 4, 2007.

quite different route to the orchestra than the one taken by the Philharmonic's first Chinese member:

> I started when I was seven. My uncle taught me to play the oboe and I went to the Beijing Conservatory when I was 13, came to the States when I was 15, went to Idyllwild Arts Academy in California, and then got into The Curtis Institute of Music at 18, and was offered jobs after I graduated in 2003: San Francisco Ballet, and then San Francisco Symphony, and then Santa Fe Opera, Cincinnati Symphony. I was appointed First Oboe in the Metropolitan Opera as well as the New York Philharmonic and came to the New York Philharmonic.[134]

Unlike Tu, who had suffered through the Cultural Revolution and was forced to bear the weight of history and his past, Wang was born in a different China, and left at a younger age, rendering him much freer to simply pursue musical excellence. At the same time, though, he did have to handle his own burden: that of becoming a symbol.

In the concluding article from *The New York Times* series, "Pilgrim With an Oboe, Citizen of the World," Wakin wrote:

> The man in black, Liang Wang, all of 26, was only a few months into his first season as principal oboist of the New York Philharmonic….It is an extraordinary place to be for a young man who just a little more than a decade ago was playing his oboe in a practice room in Beijing. But Mr. Wang's hiring was also a clarion example of the strides musicians from China have made in the realm of Western classical music. They have become a powerful presence as soloists, orchestra members and conservatory students. Immigrants—Russians, Japanese and Koreans—have long filled out orchestral string sections and excelled as pianists. But Chinese musicians have to a large extent broken out of those areas, lending their talents to woodwinds, brass and percussion instruments as well…[135]

[134] Liang Wang, interview by author, April 27, 2010.

[135] Daniel J. Wakin, "Pilgrim With an Oboe, Citizen of the World," *The New York Times*, April 8, 2007.

While unable to avoid such profiling and the greater significance of his appointment, Wang renounces this endemic labeling, proclaiming:

> I don't think of myself as Chinese first. Sure, I'm very proud of my heritage, obviously, but I'm a musician first, and then the other stuff is sort of, in a way, secondary, because that's one of the great things about music: You don't have to be Chinese to play Chinese music; you don't have to be German to play German music….I was the first wind player that's succeeded in the wind world and the first Chinese-born American, in some ways, to hold a major position in America. And, especially, since it's the New York Philharmonic, it's obviously received a great deal of attention, which I greatly appreciated. But at the same time, it's very humbling, which directed me to do the right thing, which is deliver good music.[136]

Thus, he modestly reveals the same mentality as an earlier, different kind of "pioneer," O'Brien, another media magnet who sincerely wished to return the focus to the music itself. Similarly, just as the younger generations of women are moving beyond gender, Wang wants to move beyond "Chinese" or even "Asian." This is, as Yoshihara explains, quite typical and understandable:

> …Asian musicians tended to use "musician" as a primary category of identity and often downplayed race as a category relevant to their everyday lives….In many cases, their musical identity develops much earlier than their racial identity. Most classical musicians begin their musical training at a very young age….Having grown up in Asia, where their Asian-ness is a given, they become defined as Asians only when they enter America's racialized society. Their racial identity thus comes into question well after their lives as musicians have become a central aspect of who they are.[137]

It is also important to note that Wang defines himself as "Chinese-born American," for he is quick to point out his roots in this country:

[136] Liang Wang, interview by author, April 27, 2010.

[137] Yoshihara, *Musicians From a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music*, 63.

> I left China when I was fourteen-and-a-half. I sort of see myself as an American-trained wind player. I went to The Curtis Institute of Music, the same place that Stanley [Drucker] went to, and I received very similar training….Those things come into play. I think people sometimes overlook the fact that I'm quite an American-trained oboe player. I mean, I picked up the oboe in China, but this country is where I learned the school of wind playing that has a very great tradition that keeps going. So I was fortunate enough that I was part of it.[138]

Therein lies even more of the basis for the vastly different mentalities displayed by Tu and Wang. While he is proud of having become a United States citizen in 1999, Tu's Chinese identity is also strong enough to compel him to cite additional successful Chinese musicians who have joined him in the Philharmonic. Wang, on the other hand, continually stresses the universality of music and musicians in general. It also appears that the Philharmonic community Wang joined in 2006 had become a more hospitable one than Tu faced a decade prior, for he is able to unambiguously declare: "I don't see myself any different or special than anybody else, those other guys that I respect and I love coming to work to play with….They're wonderful people and I feel like I'm part of the group….There are no divisions in music."[139]

A Glaring Absence

> Today, New York's racial order is in a state of flux as the white share of the population continues to shrink and the proportion of Hispanics and Asians grows. In the context of contemporary New York, the term racial minority, as currently used, is in fact a misnomer now that whites are actually a numerical minority—some refer to New York as a majority minority city. In 1998, according to census estimates, only 35 percent of New Yorkers were white; Asians had reached 8 percent of the citywide total; blacks, 26 percent; and Hispanics, 31 percent.[140]

[138] Liang Wang, interview by author, April 27, 2010.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, 167.

This "new" New York, portrayed by Foner, was decidedly different from the city it had been half a century earlier, when Drucker joined the New York Philharmonic. Over the course of his sixty-year career, the orchestra he remembers as a "male society," comprising musicians "from every European country," had, in some very obvious respects, changed to reflect both workplace realities and population statistics.[141] By the time he retired, he left an orchestra that had self-evidently reached the stage that Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman define as "relatively gender balanced."[142] It was also, much like its hometown, significantly less European, with Asians actually present in greater numbers than their demographics might suggest. While one need only glance at side-by-side snapshots to appreciate just how much the Philharmonic had changed between 1948 and 2008, it would, however, be hard to avoid one conspicuous similarity in such images that sets this community far apart from, not only New York City, but also the general population. For it is a cold, simple fact that, over those six decades, the Philharmonic had actually come full-circle; while it went without saying that the "all male" orchestra in 1948 was also "all white," it is much more shocking to find not one African-American musician onstage in 2008.

Though that was not always the case in the New York Philharmonic, it is evidence of a prevailing, and oft-noted, trend throughout the greater orchestral community in this country: an overrepresentation of Asians and a dearth of African-Americans and Latinos. As cellist Elaine B. Mack poetically phrases it in her 2009 book, *Black Classical Musicians in Philadelphia: Oral Histories Covering Four Generations*: "Blacks and browns lightly polka-dot our orchestras,

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[141] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

[142] Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman, "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras," 211.

outnumbered currently by Asians…."[143] At the most basic level, while the "ceiling crashing" generation of women gave way to numbers so nearly equitable as to render gender rather irrelevant, and individual Asian musicians were joined by others in increasingly rapid numbers, the same trajectory never came to pass for orchestral African-American musicians, who, instead, appear indefinitely mired in the "pioneer" stage.

Writing about "The Classical Color Line" in *The Village Voice* in 1997, Greg Sandow recalled the "…days when blacks were excluded from the classical world, days that…didn't end until eight years after Jackie Robinson played major league baseball. Not until 1955 did the Metropolitan Opera have a black singer—Marian Anderson—in a leading role, and not until 1957 did the Cleveland Orchestra break the symphonic color line by hiring a black cellist, Donald White."[144] The New York Philharmonic was not far behind when Bernstein made yet another historic appointment, hiring violinist Sanford Allen in 1962; in another seemingly promising gesture, he went on to select an African-American conductor, James DePriest, as one of his assistants in 1965. The status quo, however, endured, and impatience began to surface accordingly. In 1971, Lucille Dixon, President of the Concerned Musicians' Association, pleaded her case in *The New York Times*:

> As a woman musician, I must say that it's rather nice that the New York Philharmonic is hiring members of my sex these days. Since 1966, the Philharmonic has judged four women competent enough to be employed as permanent members of the ensemble, and a fifth will start this fall. I think that's fine. But as a *black* woman musician, I'd like to ask a question:

[143] Elaine B. Mack, *Black Classical Musicians: Oral Histories Covering Four Generations* (Little Rock, AR: Writing our World Press, 2009), xiv.

[144] Greg Sandow, "The Classical Color Line," *The Village Voice*, April 8, 1997, 71.

> How come the Philharmonic could find five qualified women musicians in such a short period of time when in the entire 129 years of its history it has found only *one* qualified black musician, irrespective of sex? Ten years ago, the Philharmonic hired its first permanent black musician, violinist Sanford Allen. Today he is still its only regular black member.[145]

One can only speculate how such a sense of frustration might have affected Allen, himself, over the years, despite the fact that Drucker sincerely believes he "was well received by the players. There's no question about that."[146] He remembers:

> Sanford Allen was known to many of the other string players from playing in the freelance world….I felt he was, as far as I could see, just another colleague….But, in classical music at the time, there were not so many African-Americans auditioning for symphonic posts. It was very difficult to get into orchestras as it is, and there weren't so many African-Americans that were applying.[147]

Once again, as with O'Brien, Allen was a "known quantity," which, at least in theory, made it easier for him to be another "first." At the same time, Drucker hints at the kind of isolation Allen may have felt, being viewed as a rarity within his field. Mansfield, who had joined the Philharmonic the year before Allen, essentially agreed with Drucker's assessment of this new member of his own violin section, and also revealed an awareness of some potential difficulties faced by Allen, whom he referred to as:

> …a colleague: period. I don't remember there being an issue about the fact that he was black. He, himself, was quite well known at the time. And we became good friends, all of us. I think he had a decent experience, the same experience that we had. Basically, he may have been

[145] Lucille Dixon, "Is It 'Artistic Judgment' Or Is It Discrimination?" *The New York Times*, August 1, 1971.

[146] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[147] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 8, 2013.

> a bit cautious at first, because he may have felt more uncomfortable with us then we felt with him. After all, he was terribly out-numbered.[148]

Mansfield's use of the word "uncomfortable" may very well be the best description of Allen's status within the Philharmonic, as it appears that an accumulation of awkwardness, and perhaps even more insidious incidents, must have taken a toll on him. In a 1967 *New York Times* op-ed, "Why Hasn't the Negro Found a Place in the Symphony?" this "concert violinist and sole Negro member of the New York Philharmonic" was still able to optimistically profess: "Twenty years ago, Negro children did not see Negroes in major symphony orchestras….I think the fact that I play in the New York Philharmonic…[indicates] that conditions are improving."[149] Only two years later, though, Henahan wrote in the same periodical: "Sanford Allen, the Philharmonic's Negro—he refers to himself that way with cool irony….is tired of being pointed out as a 'glorious example of the Philharmonic's enlightenment.'"[150] Further quotations revealed a depth of bitterness that belied Mansfield's obviously one-sided picture of "good friends."[151]

Echoing some of Allen's opinions about the orchestral world, in 1969 the Philharmonic was charged with "hiring bias" by two string players alleging they had failed to win positions "solely because of their race."[152] After a protracted 15-month period, "The Commission on Human Rights…found that the musicians had not established that they had been illegally deprived of jobs for which they had auditioned, but also that the Philharmonic had engaged in a

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[148] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[149] Sanford Allen, "Why Hasn't the Negro Found a Place in the Symphony?" *The New York Times*, June 25, 1967.

[150] Donal Henahan, "Philharmonicsville (pop. 106)," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1969.

[151] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[152] "Philharmonic Facing Charge Of Hiring Bias," *The New York Times*, June 10, 1969.

pattern of discrimination in hiring substitutes and extras. The orchestra was ordered to submit a plan…for providing minority musicians equal opportunity to work as substitutes and extras."[153] Again, one can only imagine how all this extra media coverage focusing on race must have added to Allen's burdens. On August 29, 1977, the headline in *The New York Times* simply read: "Only Black in Philharmonic Is Resigning After 15 Years."[154] As Henahan reported, "Sanford Allen, the only black to become a member of the New York Philharmonic during its 133-year history….was 'simply tired of being a symbol.' He has decided to pursue a new career as a freelance violinist and soloist."[155] Thus, the arc of Allen's Philharmonic career ended as a rather tragic statement about the continuing lack of African-American representation in orchestras. In fact, despite meeting the conditions meted out by the settlement with the Commission on Human Rights in 1972, three years after the initial discrimination case, the "long-range plan aimed at insuring minority-group musicians equal employment opportunities in the Philharmonic" has, realistically, not borne much outward success in the ensuing decades.[156]

In 1979, John Rockwell announced in *The New York Times*:

> The Philharmonic has made steady progress over the years in the hiring of women musicians, from two in the 1968-9 season to six in 1973-4 to 13 last season. But blacks are still in short supply. Sanford Allen, the only previous full-time black player, resigned, and otherwise there have been only apprentices, through an Orchestral Fellowship Program sponsored by the National Endowment and Exxon. Now, the orchestra has hired another black, Jerome Ashby, who began as assistant principal horn with this past summer's park season.[157]

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[153] "Black Musicians Issue Challenge," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1970.

[154] Donal Henahan, "Only Black in Philharmonic Is Resigning After 15 Years," *The New York Times*, August 29, 1977.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Donal Henahan, "Philharmonic, City in Antibias Pact," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1972.

[157] John Rockwell, "The New Power at Fisher Hall," *The New York Times*, September 9, 1979.

Any inclinations that this appointment, 17 years after Allen's "breakthrough," would prove any more auguring were completely unfounded, as Ashby remained the Philharmonic's lone African-American member for nearly 30 years. Tragically, he was struck with cancer, and his career ended all too prematurely, when he played his last concert with the orchestra on December 1, 2007, before succumbing on December 26 at the age of 51. If the racial makeup of the Philharmonic had not changed since 1962, it does at least appear that Ashby may have found more welcoming surroundings. Drucker recalls Ashby as "a great colleague" whom "everybody loved" and, thinking back to memorable performances they had given together, "a loss that, certainly, would be very hard to fill."[158] He elaborates: "A player like Jerry Ashby is very unique. It's very rare to find a player of that caliber as a solo horn player."[159]

It is clear that Ashby was held in similarly high esteem within his own section. Finlayson describes him as, "a very, very dear friend. He's missed greatly, both for his personality and for his playing. He really brought something special to the horn section as a player."[160] Such heartfelt feelings were most openly displayed at a concert given by the Philharmonic in January 2008, as Allan Kozinn wrote in *The New York Times*:

> …the orchestra offered a tribute to Jerome A. Ashby, its associate principal hornist and principal Wagner tuba player, who died on Dec. 26. Mr. Ashby, one of the few black musicians in the upper reaches of the American symphonic world, joined the orchestra in 1979 and spent more than half his life in it….With Mr. Ashby's portrait projected onto a large screen over the stage, the orchestra's brass players gave a serene but

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[158] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

[159] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 8, 2013.

[160] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

> emotionally intense performance of [the "Evening Prayer" from Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel."][161]

It Comes Down to Numbers

While the particular details about the only two African-American members of the New York Philharmonic are unique, the actual numbers, or more bluntly lack thereof, are not. And, in the end, it all does come down to the numbers. As Anna Clark summarized in *Colorlines* in 2007:

> While Asian musicians have found a place in classical music—and, consequently, in audiences—Black and Latinos have not. With the exception of ethnic celebration concerts, stages and audiences remain heavily white. Nationwide, less than three percent of the members of symphony orchestras are Black or Latino. An analysis of 200 U.S. orchestras by the American Symphony Orchestra League in the 2000-01 season found that 1.4 percent of musicians were Black and 1.9 percent were Latino. For Black musicians, the numbers actually declined from a similar survey in the early '90s.[162]

More specifically, according to figures provided by Brian Wise in *Newsday* in 2004, "In 2001, Chicago hired its first full-time black musician, trumpet player Tage Larson. Among the other so-called Big Five orchestras…Philadelphia has three, and Boston and Cleveland have two each."[163] At the most basic level, there is widespread agreement that in order to understand this glaring absence onstage, one simply has to look at the student bodies at the schools that consistently provide budding orchestral musicians. As Takebe explains: "I do quite a lot of

[161] Allan Kozinn, "A Tribute Followed by Precision and Fire," *The New York Times*, January 5, 2008.

[162] Anna Clark, "Classical Music," *Colorlines* 10, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2007).

[163] Brian Wise, "A Symphony of Color," *Newsday*, December 5, 2004.

teaching. I teach at Manhattan School and…Juilliard….If you go into those music schools, if you go in the building, it's almost like you're in Asia, there's so many Asians. And if you look at the list of names, they're all [Asian], *especially* in the string instruments."[164] Therefore, she feels it is "natural" that Asians have become increasingly prominent in the Philharmonic.[165]

Finlayson has welcomed the "many occasions" when the Philharmonic has employed his former student, Burt Mason, as an extra or substitute player.[166] Mason has also performed as trombonist with the Sphinx Symphony, an offshoot of the Sphinx Organization founded in 1996 by Aaron Dworkin "to help overcome the cultural stereotype of classical music, and to encourage the participation of Blacks and Latinos in the field."[167] In Finlayson's view:

> I almost think sometimes that we're on the wrong end of this feeding chain. My love of music came from what was going on in my home….It has to be first-rate, whenever we expose ourselves to the school concerts, or if we go out and do these community outreach kind of things. It has to be top-notch, and it has to be inspiring, and it has to be just available….
>
> You have to look at the schools and see what the composition of students is there. And you look and, right now, you see so many Asian kids in schools, so obviously there's a desire for Chinese, Korean, Japanese to be in American schools….And there is a disproportionate amount of black people. I guess you could say it's not emphasized in the schools, or it isn't emphasized at home. That's probably the question every education department in every orchestra's asking around the country. I don't really have a handle on exactly why. It is a shame though. It is a shame.[168]

[164] Yoko Takebe, interview by author, June 9, 2010.

[165] Ibid.

[166] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

[167] Sphinxmusic.org

[168] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

There may be no better appraisal of this continuing racial imbalance than "a shame." As Justin Davidson asserted in *Newsday* in 2007, "The rarity of blacks and Latinos in music schools, in audiences and at auditions makes it hard to charge that orchestras harbor outright resistance to hiring them."[169] One could, in fact, assume that, on the contrary, most orchestras would readily seize upon the implicit publicity that would arise from the momentous hiring of greater numbers of musicians of color; in this media-centric age, it could only benefit an ensemble if it could be viewed as groundbreaking and forward-thinking. Instead, the orchestral world seems caught in a vicious self-perpetuating cycle. As Sandow charged back in 1997, "It's no surprise that there's a sense of estrangement between African Americans and the classical music world."[170] If large segments of the population do not see themselves represented onstage, it is even more difficult to visualize someday belonging, themselves, to those ensembles; if the pool of African-American and Latino musicians auditioning remains dispiritingly small, few new role models will emerge, and, thus, present circumstances persist. In the end, while the multitudinous rationales and potential remedies for this all-encompassing trend go beyond the purview of this particular oral history study, it is clear that, for the significant ways in which the makeup of the Philharmonic community changed between 1948 and 2008, one can only hope that the faces onstage, and in the audience, too, for that matter, come to someday better reflect the New York and American communities.

[169] Justin Davidson, "Give Us Racial Harmony," *Newsday*, March 18, 2007.

[170] Sandow, "The Classical Color Line," 71.

Chapter 2: Philharmonic Logistics and the Orchestral Musician

While I was a student at Curtis, there was a notice put up that…the music director of the Indianapolis Symphony was coming to Philadelphia to audition….It was a fully professional orchestra….I went down and played for him. In those days….it all depended upon the likes, the dislikes of the conductor listening to you….And very shortly, in a few days, I heard that I was offered the position….That's how it all started for me….[171]

In the '40s, musicians took auditions constantly because the seasons weren't year-round. One couldn't make a real full-time career in any place….I took auditions because I could make more money. And I would meet some of the same musicians at all auditions, trying to use stepping-stones to something better. Of course, the Busch Players were fantastic because it was a conductor-less orchestra, very much like Orpheus is today….It was a shorter season than Indianapolis, primarily a tour, but it paid twice as much as Indianapolis did, maybe even a little more than twice as much.[172]

Busch…told me I have to play for…the music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic….They happened to have an opening for principal and…he hired me for that….A lot of the players were better than the ones in Indianapolis and the season was a little bit longer and it paid more. And that was what I guess one thought about in those days. It was a journeyman's situation sort of, a nomad kind of existence, going from one place to another, but that's what musicians did….[173]

While I was in Buffalo, I received a message that they were going to hold an audition at the New York Philharmonic….The contract was a one-page document. The salary had been raised for the coming season, when I would start, to $125 per week, and it was for 28 weeks. Now, the Philharmonic did have a summer season at the time, but it was called the Stadium Symphony, Lewisohn Stadium, where 90 players of the Philharmonic were engaged at a lower rate of pay….So it was basically a 28-week season and my contract listed me as 3rd Clarinet, which meant being Assistant to the Principal and E-flat Clarinet, and it also said I could have played any part in the section, if needed. It was like a utility chair….[174]

I started before the season. In the summer I played in two concerts at Lewisohn Stadium, where they needed a full complement….And I started

[171] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid.

> with them in October [1948] in the normal season in Carnegie Hall. The first conductor of the rehearsal of that concert was Dimitri Mitropoulos. The work was Strauss. It was *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, which is a big work, a massive work. And the Carnegie Hall stage was very awe-inspiring. It was big. The sound in there was really huge. It was just a bigger-than-life experience. [175]

In chronicling his rise from a 15-year-old student at The Curtis Institute of Music to a 19-year-old clarinetist with the New York Philharmonic, Stanley Drucker portrays a decidedly unsettled orchestral lifestyle. Presented with the opportunity to commence his career as a professional musician as Principal Clarinet of the Indianapolis Symphony at the age of 16, he was driven, both by economic necessity and serendipitous connections, to move on, in rapid succession, to principal positions with the Adolf Busch Chamber Players and the Buffalo Philharmonic. Though indisputably one of the oldest, most prestigious, and well-financed orchestras in the country, the New York Philharmonic that Drucker had arrived at by 1948 still did not provide a weekly, year-round paycheck that would allow for the stability desired by any working individual. He recalls an orchestral season that left huge gaps needing to be filled in any number of creative ways, but he can also fondly reflect upon the grandeur and wonder of rehearsing and performing with the Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall.

In his early years at the New York Philharmonic, Drucker surely could not have foreseen just how rapidly those circumstances would change during Leonard Bernstein's tenure as music director. First, the Philharmonic left behind its longstanding home base at Carnegie Hall to take up residency in Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center in 1962; shortly thereafter, the orchestra became the first in the country to achieve a 52-week contract, officially becoming a full-time ensemble in 1964. Those two significant changes provide the basis for this chapter, dealing with

[175] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

"Philharmonic Logistics and the Orchestral Musician," as they are inextricably intertwined. While both reflect the general luster of the oft-publicized "Bernstein years," the expansion to a year-round schedule forever changed the definition of "orchestral musician," imbuing such a position with a new sense of permanence and professionalism. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the ways some Philharmonic members have found creative rejuvenation by involving themselves in such activities as committee work, educational outreach, and chamber music. Bypassing the potential pitfalls of monotony arising from an increasingly demanding schedule, these players have continued, and will continue, to redefine the possibilities of the orchestral musician in the 21st century.

We Must Have a Philharmonic Hall!

> Vast ambitions were raised in the souls of the founders of the new organization. The most common and persistent of these ambitions related to a permanent domicile for the Society. "We must have a Philharmonic Hall!" was the cry….The first outcropping manifested itself in the fourth season [in 1846]….As part of this plan the Philharmonic…gave a Festival Concert….Beethoven's "Choral" Symphony received its first performance in America, but the smallness of the monetary returns was a wet blanket on the hopes of the would-be hall-builders….The idea of owning a hall flitted furtively through the fancy of the Society's enterprising spirits for many years thereafter.[176]

Written in 1892, Henry Edward Krehbiel's above account, from *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial*, emphasizes just how early the orchestra's quest for its own concert hall began to percolate. By 1917, in *The Philharmonic Society of New York And Its 75th Anniversary: A Retrospect*, James Gibbons Huneker had assumed a more plaintive tone:

[176] Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial*, 66-67.

> During its long existence The Philharmonic Society has offered its audiences only the best in the literature of music….and, as a climax to its seventy-fifth anniversary, it needs but a home of its own, a home that it can name—Philharmonic Hall….Surely…we of the Philharmonic…may look forward…with every hope, to the films that the future is so quickly to unwind. And as they unroll may they surely show the home of our own for which we long….Upon some reel there must be other patrons to give to this orchestra the foundations it needs—as stable as those of the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Natural History….If we should receive such a home, therein we pledge, men shall play not merely for themselves, nor for their city, nor yet for their country, but for their art….[177]

In 1943, a mere five years before Drucker joined the Philharmonic, John Erskine picked up with yet another variation on a familiar theme in *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*: "The Philharmonic's hundred years are naturally bound up with the growth of New York City. From the Apollo Rooms to Carnegie Hall there have been changes in the quality as well as the location of the auditoriums which have housed the Society's concerts—housed them, that is, never quite adequately, or adequately only for a time….No hall at any time, not even now, has quite measured up to the Philharmonic's ideals."[178] Returning to Krehbiel's litany, he concludes: "Philharmonic Hall has not yet come into being, but the orchestra in its fourth season had the right idea."[179]

As Erskine suggested, the early history of the New York Philharmonic was an itinerant one, with concerts held in a variety of locales after its original birth at the Apollo Rooms. By 1856, the orchestra finally began to achieve a modicum of stability, settling at the Academy of Music at 14th Street and Irving Place, where, notwithstanding the period from 1861 to 1868, it

[177] Huneker, *The Philharmonic Society of New York and its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospect*, 29-30, 47.

[178] Erksine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*, 11.

[179] Ibid., 13.

remained until 1886. Opting for more opulent and spacious environs, that year the Philharmonic resettled itself at the Metropolitan Opera House that had opened at 39th Street and Broadway in 1883. It was actually a rival orchestra, the New York Symphony Society, that famously inaugurated a brand new theatre on May 5, 1891. Though financed by the steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, the highly publicized event, for which Tchaikovsky had journeyed from Russia to conduct his own *Marche Solennelle*, formally opened what was then known simply as "Music Hall." Eventually ceding to the realities of popular usage, "Carnegie Hall" was essentially rechristened for the 1894-95 season.

As Theodore O. Cron and Burt Goldblatt note in their 1966 *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, "The superiority of Carnegie Hall over all the auditoriums of New York was quickly recognized. The stage could accommodate more than the sixty-man orchestra of the day, though backstage was—and still is—uncomfortably cramped."[180] Indeed, though the May 6, 1891, headline of *The New York Times* proclaimed, "It Stood The Test Well," and deemed the hall "adequate in its acoustic properties," an array of structural limitations repeatedly surfaced as a deterrent for the New York Philharmonic.[181] In *Carnegie Hall: The First One Hundred Years*, published in 1987, Richard Schickel and Michael Walsh explain that, "bookings that initial season were scarce. The hoped-for permanent resident, the Philharmonic, had decided to stay on at the Metropolitan Opera because its patrons found the boxes there 'superior in size, location, and number' to the accommodations available on Fifty-seventh Street."[182] As it so happens, however, the

[180] Theodore O. Cron and Burt Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall: A Nostalgic Portrait in Pictures and Words of America's Greatest Stage and the Artists Who Performed There* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 21.

[181] "It Stood The Test Well," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1891.

[182] Richard Schickel and Michael Walsh, *Carnegie Hall: The First One Hundred Years* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987), 18.

Metropolitan Opera House suffered a devastating fire in August, 1892, and the New York Philharmonic began a new era at Carnegie Hall on November 18, 1892. While eventually merging with its nemesis to officially form the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, Inc. in 1928, and despite continued hopes for that hallowed "Philharmonic Hall," by the time Drucker joined the New York Philharmonic in 1948, the orchestra had been in residence in Carnegie Hall for over half a century.

Lincoln Center

> It was really an old dream. In the 1930's Charles Spofford, a young member of the Metropolitan Opera Board of Directors, discussed the need for a new opera house with the fiery, music-loving Mayor of New York City, Fiorello H. LaGuardia. "What we really need," the Mayor said, "is a music center, a place where music of all kinds will be performed, and maybe the New York Philharmonic will join in—something like that!"[183]

Two decades after that conversation, as recounted by Ralph G. Martin in his 1971 examination of *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, an announcement appeared in *The New York Times* on June 23, 1956: "Sponsors of the performing arts center that is to be part of the…Lincoln Square redevelopment filed incorporation papers yesterday. John D. Rockefeller 3d, chairman of a special committee that has brought the Metropolitan Opera, Philharmonic-Symphony, City Ballet and other groups together, announced the filing….The non-profit corporation will be called the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc."[184] As Rockefeller would later explain in a 1962 *New York Times* article, "The Evolution: Birth Of a Great Center,"

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[183] Ralph G. Martin, *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 10.

[184] "Lincoln Sq. Group Asks For Charter," *The New York Times*, June 23, 1956.

it was another meeting with Spofford that led to his own involvement in such an ambitious enterprise, for Spofford informed him of "three coincidences."[185] The facilities at the same Metropolitan Opera House where the New York Philharmonic had once performed, and which had been rebuilt after the 1892 fire, were no longer sufficient, and the institution had made recent inquires about alternative locations. In turn, Robert Moses, who was overseeing the City's Committee on Slum Clearance, suggested land that would become available through the Lincoln Square Urban Renewal Project on the upper West Side. Finally, the New York Philharmonic was facing eviction from Carnegie Hall, which was, at that time, slated for demolition. Factor into those "coincidences" the association with Rockefeller, a member of one of New York's most esteemed families, and this "old dream" was destined to become a reality.

In addition to the long coveted Philharmonic Hall and a new Metropolitan Opera House, the original design scheme called for four other halls to house ballet, theater, a library and museum devoted to the performing arts, and The Juilliard School. The project was not, however, without controversy, as Martin points out: "a large human problem was still unresolved. Although the site for the new Center was a blighted neighborhood that had been set for renewal, it was still a neighborhood. More than 5,000 families lived there and nearly 600 small businesses were in the area….The relocation took almost three years."[186] Though debate may have still lingered as to just how the process took place, the official ground-breaking ceremony for Lincoln Center on May 14, 1959, was a grand affair, marked by the presence of President Dwight D. Eisenhower wielding a shovel, Mayor Robert Wagner, Moses, Rockefeller, and Bernstein, in his first season as music director, leading performances by a soloist from the

[185] John D. Rockefeller 3rd, "The Evolution: Birth Of a Great Center," *The New York Times*, September 23, 1962.

[186] Martin, *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, 21.

Metropolitan Opera, the Juilliard chorus, and the entire Philharmonic. Philharmonic Hall, an entity originally conceptualized back in 1846, was scheduled to be the first building completed. Martin summarized: "The Philharmonic's ties to Carnegie were strong and sentimental. To the bravos of the world, it had performed in Carnegie Hall with most of the great conductors….But now the lease…was almost up, and time was running out. The Philharmonic needed a new home, a permanent home."[187]

Amidst all this revelry and planning for the future, there were some more somber, underlying currents in need of addressing. Lofty proclamations, issuing from Eisenhower and other politicians, and joined by encouraging op-ed pieces in periodicals, were to be expected. This was, after all, as Stephen Stamas and Sharon Zane note in *Lincoln Center: A Promise Realized, 1979-2006*, "the nation's first performing arts complex."[188] Martin goes even further, emphasizing: "The idea was unique. No country in the world had ever produced such a cultural center—not simply a grouping of buildings, its overall concept was bigger than any of its parts. In the early 1950's the plan was without parallel…."[189] At the same time, the indisputable fact was that this unprecedented artistic undertaking required an astounding accumulation of money, initially projected at $75 million, and eventually totaling more than double that amount. In order to literally break ground for Lincoln Center, Rockefeller was compelled to pursue new fundraising strategies, managing, for the first time, to secure contributions from large corporations for artistic purposes; he was similarly successful in wielding his influence

[187] Martin, *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, 33.

[188] Stephen Stamas and Sharon Zane, *Lincoln Center: A Promise Realized, 1979-2006* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2007), 2.

[189] Martin, *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, 10.

(undoubtedly further enhanced by the fact that his brother, Nelson Rockefeller, had been elected Governor of New York in 1958) to obtain city, state, and federal funds.

Such corporate and government support would have far-reaching implications for the New York Philharmonic in the 1960s and beyond, as those vast sums could only mask the seeds of musician discontent for so long. In the July 1959 issue of *Allegro*, the official publication of Local 802, Associated Musicians of Greater NY, President Alfred J. Manuti raised the specter of financial priorities:

> Since its dedication last May, work has been going ahead steadily on Philharmonic Hall, the major concert hall of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and the new home of the New York Philharmonic. The entire Lincoln Center is one of the great cultural projects of our time, and its tremendous scope has captured the imagination of people everywhere….All of this is as it should be. But…there is one other ingredient which is essential—and that is the human one….The key phrase in the title of the entire project is "performing arts." What the performers do here will give everything else meaning. It is therefore only right and proper that the same broadness of vision and planning for the future which is being devoted to the physical dimensions of the Center should also be applied to its human elements.
>
> In specific terms…planning should begin now to employ both the Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera orchestras on a year-round basis. For the first time in America, let us have two orchestras whose members can finally have the economic security and peace of mind that only guaranteed full employment can bring….[The] originators of the project expect to raise the $75,000,000 or more necessary for its completion. They accept this…just as they accept that the original budgeted $8,5000,000 for the Philharmonic Hall will have to be increased to $9,500,000. Is there any real reason why the increased needs of human beings cannot…also be budgeted?
>
> A great deal has been made of the fact that…the Center will function as an integrated focal point for the community's cultural and artistic life. That cannot be done on a part or seasonal basis. It must be a full time activity, and as such will necessarily require full time performance….[If] the artists who perform there are considered as important, in human terms, as the

> buildings themselves, the Center cannot fail to become the dynamic symbol of the performing arts in America.[190]

With such a seemingly reasonable and logical plea left unresolved, there was the more pressing issue of the fate of Carnegie Hall, and the Philharmonic's imminent eviction. Facing a looming 1960 deadline, violinist Isaac Stern rose to lead a Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall, and it was largely a tribute to his determination that the campaign to save the auditorium proved successful. Having dodged the wrecking ball, Carnegie Hall was purchased by New York City and leased to the Carnegie Hall Corporation. Bernstein led the New York Philharmonic and Stern in a celebratory reopening concert on September 26, 1960, and the orchestra was able to continue playing there until its new hall was ready, giving its farewell performance on May 20, 1962.

Perhaps it is somewhat poetic that it was during this final season that Drucker made his solo Philharmonic debut. In 1960, after 12 seasons as Assistant Principal and E-flat Clarinet, Bernstein appointed him to the recently vacated principal chair, and, in this new leadership role, in October of 1961, he collaborated for the first time with the music director to perform Debussy's *Rhapsody* for Clarinet and Orchestra. Drawing from his wellspring of experience, Drucker reflects upon the huge forthcoming change for the entire orchestra: "It was home for a long time, Carnegie was. The stage is very welcoming; the shape of the hall is very enveloping….It certainly has held up very well over the years: that same resistance when you blow into that hall, and the quality of sound that hangs, is certainly among the best anywhere."[191]

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[190] Alfred J. Manuti, "The Lincoln Center," *Allegro* XXXIII, no. 9 (July 1959), 2, 4.

[191] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 27, 2009.

As the opening of Philharmonic Hall was set for September 23, 1962, Schickel and Walsh offer a fitting tribute to the end of a residency that stretched back to the late nineteenth century:

> For roughly seventy-five years, the fates of the New York Philharmonic and Carnegie Hall had been intertwined and inseparable….Yet the history of Carnegie Hall had been more than the story of the…Philharmonic. It was the history of music in the United States, and that legacy would continue. Carnegie Hall had never been thought of exclusively as the home of the New York Philharmonic; rather, it was identified as the American musical mecca, the place to which all aspiring performers must journey before they could truly call themselves artists. Everybody knew that to get there you had to practice, practice, practice.[192]

Philharmonic Hall: The Verdict(s)

> Nobody knew how anything would turn out and the impact any new venue would make. But what excited most, I think, was the fact that all the arts would be in one accessible place and, as the times called for, everything would be new and fresh….Carnegie Hall had been there so long that it didn't have the feeling of "one must always be here," because even the people that owned Carnegie Hall were thinking of taking the building down….I think the evolution was a correct one because it made an *ease* of attendance. It made a campus where one could walk around without traffic….I feel its benefits outweigh any possible shortcomings….I know they had problems with various facets of the halls as they opened. They had to do a lot of re-doing. Of course, there were a lot of experts. So maybe fewer experts and more geniuses would have been better.[193]

In Drucker's assessment of the Philharmonic's move from Carnegie Hall to Lincoln Center, his understated use of the word "problems" and humorous conclusion are indicative of his tendency to focus on the music and shut out extraneous "hoopla." Such reserve must have proved useful amidst the circus-like atmosphere his memories evoke:

[192] Schickel and Walsh, *Carnegie Hall: The First One Hundred Years*, 230.

[193] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

> It was exciting, first of all, the preparation to the opening of that hall. There were weeks of testing, where pistols were shot off to see the acoustics. They had plastic dummies in seats to absorb sound. They had all kinds of devices to change the ceiling over the stage, where things could be angled and acoustical reflectors were there, and many different things were tried….There were forms to fill out at the beginning and end of every day, where you had to put your impressions down. And many different musicians came, and conductors that involved themselves in the talking process.[194]

The new concert hall would affect the Philharmonic in two major ways. First, members would have to get accustomed to attending rehearsals and performing concerts in a different environment in another part of the city, for on the most basic level, Philharmonic Hall was a building serving as a workplace for these professional musicians. As Drucker explains:

> Physically, the plan backstage was better in the new hall. It had more facilities. It had proper warm-up rooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms. It had more creature comfort and room, where Carnegie was limited to one large room. (Of course, it was all male in those days, so they didn't need the separation.) There was a newness to it. It was just so different. At Carnegie, there's only one way on or off that stage, where at…Philharmonic Hall you can go off the stage to backstage areas from both sides of the stage….Now, even with Carnegie Hall today, the backstage areas are inadequate, certainly no better than it was when I was there in the late '40s and '50s….[195]

> Transportation-wise and comfort-wise, I think Lincoln Center is a major improvement, because one walks out onto a promenade and to a campus, where at Carnegie Hall you just came out on a street….This is a major development in New York City, having the new area where all of these arts organizations had their own buildings and where one could meet at a central location. It was easy for the audience to arrive and to leave and to be met. It's a really wonderful design.[196]

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[194] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid.

Second, since the orchestra is most defined by the actual quality of the concerts presented to the public, the players would come to be embroiled, to an unimaginable extent, with the acoustics of this new Philharmonic Hall. Yet again, Drucker takes up this contentious issue in a lucid, balanced manner:

> As far as *my* actual impression of it, I felt from the start that it favored the high instruments, especially the high woodwinds. There was a certain urgency, a certain clarity that appeared. Now, the lower instruments, double basses, cellos, from what I could hear from my seat…sounded very small in size. There was clarity…but there was a miniature feeling of what you heard. Everything was smaller than I remembered, being just in the Carnegie Hall situation for twelve years and just moving over from there. For a blowing instrument like I was playing, clarinet, in a certain sense, you had something to play against in Carnegie Hall. There was a resistance factor that added to the total sound, where there was less resistance blowing a note in the Philharmonic Hall, as it was called then….[197]

> I'm not an acoustician but I know what I hear. There was nothing mysterious or covered in the sound. It was a naked sort of small sound at that time—but clear, very clear….Of course, the big shock originally was that they were coming from Carnegie Hall. *That* was the shocker because one expected in your instrument to have a certain blowing resistance, a certain bowing resistance maybe, and if you didn't get that feedback into your ears, it was a change. Any change has got to be jolting.[198]

A naturally forthright individual, violinist Newton Mansfield joined the Philharmonic in 1961 and was able to perform with the orchestra for its last season at Carnegie Hall. From a completely different perspective onstage, he offers a more blunt summation of the relocation:

> Everyone was very excited about the move. I mean, there were a lot of things that were great about Carnegie Hall, but it was not audience-friendly and it was not musician-friendly, from the standpoint of the backstage facilities. And here we were moving to a place where we would

[197] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[198] Ibid.

> have *everything*. Of course, we didn't know the true story….[Philharmonic Hall] didn't compare to Carnegie Hall….We came into the hall before it opened, and all the seats were filled with foam rubber to make believe that it was full of an audience. There was a cannon onstage and the cannon was fired and the firing of the cannon sounded absolutely fantastic. The problem was that once the orchestra got onstage and started playing, if you were about any more than ten feet away from the orchestra you couldn't hear a thing. That was the hall. Before the opening they were talking about amplifying the orchestra, putting in microphones, and finally it was decided that we'd just wing it like this. It was a disaster.[199]

Indeed, it was almost shocking how quickly all encomiums fell away and Philharmonic Hall became associated with only one word: acoustics. In his *New York Times* preview, on September 23, 1962, Alan Rich saluted, "Philharmonic Hall Opens Today And With It a New Era for City":

> Philharmonic Hall will open tonight, and, with it, a new era in the cultural life of New York City. The first unit in a $142,000,000 enclave of buildings known as Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the hall will be the first truly permanent home of the 120-year-old New York Philharmonic….The Philharmonic…will enjoy for the first time the luxury of having offices, box office and auditorium under the same roof….Among the notables attending the opening concert tonight will be Mrs. John F. Kennedy….Governor Rockefeller, Mayor Wagner…and a vast array of civic and cultural leaders….The entire event will be televised coast to coast…and will also be recorded….[200]

The following day, in the same paper, Harold C. Schonberg struck a measured tone about the Philharmonic's concert led by Bernstein:

> It is safe to say that everybody attending the opening of Philharmonic Hall felt the hand of history heavily pressing down….All realized that the

[199] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[200] Alan Rich, "Philharmonic Hall Opens Today And With It a New Era for City," *The New York Times*, September 23, 1962.

> occasion was an important entry in the cultural ledger of the United States….The acoustics of the auditorium will be discussed if for no other reason than they are quite different from those of Carnegie Hall; and to most New Yorkers Carnegie Hall has been the norm for symphonic sound ever since 1891….The major, the overriding question in most minds, pertained to the quality of the new hall. Does Philharmonic Hall "work"? How, acoustically, does it compare with Carnegie Hall? And here there are going to be wild differences of opinion. For at present Philharmonic Hall is an inconsistent hall….All of which means that some work still remains in tuning Philharmonic Hall. There is no reason why this cannot be done….On the basis of present accomplishment, Philharmonic Hall should turn out to be a fine theater in the modern style: not a mellow house but a clear, uncolored, vigorous one, in which each strand of musical material will be easily followed.[201]

Only three days later, on September 27, 1962, Schonberg reported: "Everybody attending Philharmonic Hall concerts is acoustic-struck. Intermission talk these days concerns not how Bernstein did this or Cliburn that, but whether or not bass can be heard, and how about those acoustic panels, and what's it like today as against yesterday? It's like a fever chart, now up, now down. Last night took a slight turn for the worse."[202] In *The New Yorker* on October 6, 1962, Winthrop Sargeant assumed an overwhelmingly dismissive attitude toward the entire concept of Lincoln Center:

> Since the opening of…Philharmonic Hall…I have spent nearly a week of evenings there….I have never regarded acoustics as the most important aspect of music, but good acoustics are to the art of music what a clean sheet of paper and a good typewriter ribbon are to a writer. They are, in other words, something you ought to have to make a start; you can get along without them, but not happily….[We] were treated to a variety of acoustical effects….This demonstration…was, however, not as reassuring as it might seem….Moreover, the acoustical experiments…were at no time entirely satisfactory, even in respect to simple clarity and beauty of sound….

[201] Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: The Occasion," *The New York Times*, September 24, 1962.

[202] Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: Bernstein, Five Works and the Acoustics," *The New York Times*, September 27, 1962.

> Of course, there was music, too, but what with…the vagaries of the acoustical system, serious criticism of most of it offers a difficult problem. On opening night, Leonard Bernstein shone in all his glory….After all, it was, in a sense, *his* auditorium, built expressly for the orchestra of which he is the boss….As the week came to a close, I had some further thoughts about Lincoln Center….However noble in conception and expensive in execution…when corporate enterprise is applied to art, it can wind up with television and Rockettes….(Many of my nonmusical friends were more impressed by the television coverage…than my musical friends were by what actually went on in the auditorium.)[203]

In *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, Martin recapitulated:

> The central problem [with Philharmonic Hall], of course, was the acoustics. The "experts," amateur and professional, offered varied opinions. Some said the sound was not warm enough. Others complained that the bass response seemed to get soaked up somewhere. Some said the music did not "envelop" them, and that it was sometimes a little strident….So much was written about the Hall's acoustics that some curious people even asked the ushers, "Where are the acoustics?"[204]

Rampant rumors and speculation gave way to a seemingly endless series of acoustic alterations, commencing with "Phase I and Phase II" over the summer of 1963, followed by more changes over the summers of 1964, 1965, and 1969. Renamed Avery Fisher Hall in 1973, acknowledging a substantial donation from the founder of Fisher Radio, the interior was eventually gutted in 1976. Even that large-scale reconstruction did not mark the end of the travails; another attempt was made to rectify lingering complaints in 1992, but the issue of acoustics still never fails to resurface in discussions of the auditorium.

Faced with this barrage of criticism, the originally highly touted move from Carnegie Hall to Lincoln Center proved to be quite demoralizing for many members of the Philharmonic.

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[203] Winthrop Sargeant, "Musical Events," *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1962, 94-96, 98.

[204] Martin, *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, 36-37.

Jon Deak joined the bass section in 1969, between the tenures of Bernstein and Pierre Boulez, and was appointed Associate Principal Bass in 1973. He draws links between the hall and the orchestra's stature:

> Part of the change was coming into the orchestra at a time when the orchestra was actually very visible in New York City's cultural life. We had just come off of a tour…all over the world with Bernstein….On the tour previously, the one to the Soviet Union, we had actually had a ticker tape parade down Broadway. The Philharmonic members were widely known….They were city-wide figures, like celebrities. The Philharmonic was newly ensconced in this awful-sounding hall at that time. We had just come from Carnegie Hall. I actually played, as a student at Juilliard, in the first season that that hall was open. So, over the years with Boulez, we were well known but it was more of an intellectual esteem. And then somehow, during the following decade or so, the orchestra declined in its visibility vis-à-vis the community, in other words, New York City.[205]

Deak's bass colleague Orin O'Brien offers a different kind of detailed critique of the hall and its effects on the Philharmonic:

> As an orchestral musician, you're in a group and you're thinking about coordination the whole time….There's split-second decisions that have to be made about when to play, how loud, how soft, what's going to be correct at that moment for that conductor and that soloist. It's *very* tricky, especially on our terrible stage. Everybody knows it's a terrible stage. When we go to Carnegie, or we go on tour, we sound so much better to ourselves. It's a revelation: We're really good, yes we are. But it's not so easy on this stage. It's really quite, quite difficult….Here it's really hard to make a sound. The only instruments that really sound good here are the high woodwinds like clarinet and flute and piccolo. It's true. Above middle-C projects very well, and percussion and brass, but strings have a hard time in this hall….[206]

Perhaps O'Brien's insight helps to explain Drucker's less critical stance:

[205] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

[206] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

> I remember Stokowski as one of the people coming to voice his opinion….He came onstage, and all the experts were out there in the house, and he said, "Eroica."…He said, "First two measures," those two E-flat chords: yamp, yamp. The orchestra played those two chords. Naturally, they could play it in their sleep. He turned to the assembled group out there and he said, "Sent for me too late," and he walked off. But it was that kind of a situation where everybody voiced an opinion. So naturally everybody writing about the hall jumped on the bandwagon in saying, "Oh, it doesn't have this, it doesn't have that." But if one really was careful and listened to what it sounded like in other halls of that vintage, you'd see that it's just as good and better than most.[207]

Drucker's characteristically unpretentious opinions reveal some impatience with all the acoustical hysteria, as he points out:

> It's difficult to compare an old hall like Carnegie Hall and a new hall like Philharmonic Hall. One should compare two new ones or two old ones. But I will say, though, the changes that were made over the years at various times have enhanced the things that were not perfect at the opening. And, as a matter of fact, having the experience of playing in so many new halls over the world, I would say that the Avery Fisher Hall of today holds its own *extremely* well and better than a lot of them. It's really a very good sound in there now and not all new halls have achieved that.[208]

He is also compelled to offer a broader vision, connecting the Philharmonic community with its new role as a constituent member of the Lincoln Center community:

> It was a culmination of many years of planning….Philharmonic Hall was the first building to open. It changed the landscape up there, which was sort of a little gritty neighborhood with lack of development of any kind. But it changed the face of New York City, no question about it. And the people that planned it, they had a vision and they stuck to it and made it happen….We were very lucky. New York deserves it. It's a first city.[209]

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[207] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[208] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 27, 2009.

[209] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

The Quest for a Weekly Pay Check

> I was very lucky with the short [New York Philharmonic] season because I could go home to my parents. I did a few odd jobs here and there, musically. I played the ice show on a two-week engagement. I played in a band at the racetrack. I also was a member of a band in the National Guard, which did a two-week engagement in the summer….So there was a musical experience. *And* whatever one could do. Some of my friends and I, we had a woodwind quintet. We'd play together occasionally. Other than that, there was no unemployment insurance in the early days, though that came a little later….Some of the very best players didn't want to play in symphony orchestras because they couldn't make a living….Some…went into radio and others went into the commercial end of it, recording what they used to call jingles. The symphony orchestra was sort of the poor relation at that time, financially.[210]

Drucker's decision to pursue a career in the orchestral world of the 1940s clearly required much determination and fortitude, along with a hefty dose of versatility. Mansfield recalls his similar background as a member of the Pittsburgh Symphony from 1952 to 1959: "When I worked in Pittsburgh, we had, I think, a 28-week season. Now that means for half a year you were on unemployment….So it was rough. You couldn't possibly make your living out of just playing in the orchestra."[211] One can easily grasp, then, why the Philharmonic's move to Lincoln Center, and all its attendant focus on construction and expenditures, might stir up resentment among musicians seeking the elusive weekly pay check for which Local 802 President Manuti advocated in July 1959.

While it is incontrovertibly true that over the period of seven decades in which the New York Philharmonic had been based at Carnegie Hall the details concerning what exactly constituted a "season" had drastically changed, it was not a matter of incremental accretion or

[210] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

[211] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

expansion but, rather, a significant reorganization of the entire institution that took place early on in that residency. Back in 1892, the Philharmonic that performed twelve concerts for its 51st season, and its first at Carnegie Hall, was still a cooperative society, as Krehbiel delineated:

> The Philharmonic Society of New York is a democratic, or rather communistic, body. It is composed of professional musicians. Its organic law is a constitution, by-laws, and charter. Its purpose from the time of its foundation has been the cultivation of instrumental music….The Conductor…is elected by ballot….The profits accruing from…concerts are divided among the men who have earned the money….The Conductor receives a salary for his services….The number of rehearsals and concerts to be given…are determined by the Directors at the beginning of each season….[212]

Such an undeniably admirable system had never supported anything resembling what typically comes to mind when discussions of orchestral seasons arise and, after 67 years, the musicians essentially admitted defeat and acceded to a completely new way of running the institution.

In 1909, the New York Philharmonic officially became a subsidized orchestra, engaged by a board of directors: extremely wealthy and influential individuals who, in assuming this financial responsibility, were fulfilling what they believed to be a societal obligation. They secured the services of Gustav Mahler as conductor and guaranteed the members a 23-week season at the minimum weekly rate of $35. Though at the time this transition from democracy to dictatorship must have seemed radical to the players, it brought with it some semblance of cohesiveness and stability that had not been possible before. In fact, this new model proved so viable that very little had actually changed by the time Drucker joined the Philharmonic nearly 40 years later, hired for a 28-week season at $125 a week. By 1948, unionism was also a well-

[212] Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial*, 11, 12, 14, 15.

established part of orchestral life, reflecting the desire to band together in pursuit of better working conditions.

Localized attempts to unionize date back to the mid-19th century, eventually resulting in the formation of the American Federation of Musicians in 1896. According to Philip Hart in his comprehensive 1973 study, *Orpheus in the Underworld: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution*:

> Until the mid-1950s, with unions acting as sole bargaining agents for the players, American orchestras enjoyed relatively tranquil personnel relations: from 1922 to 1954 there was but one work stoppage (and that for one day only) among American orchestras. But musicians' militancy, long festering under the surface, erupted spectacularly in the next decade and a half: from 1954 through 1970 there were seventeen such interruptions, totaling 439 days and involving ten orchestras.[213]

In New York, the focus on the lavish plans and fundraising for Lincoln Center only added fire to those flames. The status quo had grown increasingly intolerable and, when contract negotiations began in the fall of 1957, the Philharmonic began a concerted campaign to expand the season to 36 weeks. Prophetically, on September 22, 1957, in *The New York Times*, Howard Taubman stated:

> Without intending to intervene at a delicate moment in negotiations, this department would like to endorse the principle of a longer working year for the Philharmonic….Unless he earns a very high salary, an instrumentalist with a family to support cannot look forward to fourteen weeks without income as something to be grateful for….It is both unreasonable and unsound to expect an institution like the Philharmonic to be a part-time affair. When an instrument of rare sensitivity is developed over the years, it should be encouraged to function at capacity.[214]

[213] Philip Hart, *Orpheus in the New World: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), 111.

[214] Howard Taubman, "Longer Season," *The New York Times*, September 22, 1957.

Nevertheless, in the end, two concerts were cancelled before the Philharmonic members reluctantly agreed to the 32 weeks originally offered by management. The 38 weeks to which they acceded in 1960 did little to mask the growing malaise. Hart provides concrete justification for this sense of inequity spreading throughout the general orchestral community:

> According to 1960 United States Census data….Among forty-nine professional groups, musicians and music teachers ranked fortieth in annual income, below professional athletes, salesmen, therapists, and funeral directors, and only slightly higher than medical and dental technicians and librarians. Moreover, in the postwar era symphony-orchestra players failed to keep up with other professions in the increase of income….[The] gains of such other professionals as schoolteachers, athletes, university professors, and librarians—to say nothing of lawyers and doctors—exceeded those of symphony players by at least a third and as much as double. These are discouraging data indeed for a profession that requires intensive and dedicated study from childhood, and a degree of general and specialized education…to say nothing of reasonably rare native talent.[215]

The seemingly inevitable clash finally emerged as a one-week strike in October 1961, shortly after the New York Philharmonic began its farewell season at Carnegie Hall. A highly publicized attempt to attain full-time employment was roundly thwarted, as the players capitulated, resigning themselves to a three-year contract that would gradually extend the season to 42 weeks, paving the path to Philharmonic Hall with three more years of lingering frustration.

A Milestone Reached: A Great Job

> Musicians of the New York Philharmonic will be guaranteed year-round employment with four weeks of paid vacation under terms of a new agreement announced yesterday. The agreement will begin at the start of the new season in September. It will be the first time that an entire

[215] Hart, *Orpheus in the New World: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution*, 110-111.

> symphony orchestra in the United States will operate on a 52-week basis.[216]

As reported in *The New York Times* on May 1, 1964, the Philharmonic had not only achieved a long sought-after milestone, but had the additional distinction of being "the first" to literally implement the policy. By that time, the Philadelphia Orchestra had already revealed plans to assume a 52-week season in 1965; The Boston Symphony Orchestra had a 50-week season scheduled for 1964. In the May 1964 edition of *Allegro,* nearly five years after he had called for full-time employment to coincide with the opening of Lincoln Center, Manuti celebrated:

> …our new three-year contract with the New York Philharmonic…which for the first time anywhere in the world guarantees members of a symphony orchestra full year-round employment….Aside from the material gains and fringe benefits, this contract in my opinion is historic. With it New York Philharmonic players reach a new plateau. They also blaze a trail that is to be followed next year by the Philadelphia Orchestra….In a statement to the press I said I thought this year-round employment for our Philharmonic people will help enhance the cultural life of our city. But this is not all. I think the new contract will also spur greater public interest in live music, the stimulation of which is an objective towards which all of us must work.[217]

This landmark contract, announced near the conclusion of the orchestra's second season at Philharmonic Hall, offered dividends to both administrators and players. To begin with, it managed to at least temporarily serve as a distraction from the endless fascination with acoustics, and refocus attention on the actual Philharmonic community. Furthermore, as Mansfield wryly notes, "The 52-week season was more or less dictated by the fact that the hall was air-

[216] Theodore Strongin, "Philharmonic and Musicians Agree on Year-Round Contract," *The New York Times,* May 1, 1964.

[217] Alfred J. Manuti, "The Philharmonic Contract," *Allegro* LXIII, no. 5 (May 1964), 1.

conditioned and they had to use it for 52 weeks."[218] Nevertheless, irrespective of any official agendas, the assurance of a steady flow of income would forever redefine what it meant to be an "orchestral musician." Drucker accordingly mulls over the spirit and significance of the 1960s:

> It was an evolution going on at that time in orchestral history. It was growing pains, labor pains, so to speak, where the musicians were trying to break out of the old formulas, and the working conditions, and the touring conditions, and trying to make more of a secure life. Because musicians were always considered vagabonds or travelers, where one moved about and didn't stay in one place all the time. In my early years, people *constantly* took auditions because they went to another place that had a one-week or a two-week longer season and maybe ten dollars more per week….where today one can make a career in almost any place in the U.S. and have a wonderful life without having to constantly move to another place because the conditions were better.[219]

With over 60 years of his own orchestral experience, Mansfield concludes, "To play in an orchestra was a part-time job for many, many, many, many years. Now it is a full-time occupation. And it gives birth to other jobs: teaching and all kinds of things. But it is, in itself, at least respectable as a source of income."[220]

Both Drucker and Mansfield allude to a significant process of social elevation for orchestral musicians. When both men began their careers in the 1940s, it was difficult to summon up pride when winning an audition still necessitated scrounging for additional sources of remuneration and keeping abreast of more sustainable conditions elsewhere. Many musicians viewed orchestral work with some disdain, preferring, if at all possible, to seek employment in more lucrative areas of the entertainment industry. Therefore, it was understandably difficult for audience members to conceive of orchestral musicians as serious, career-minded individuals rather than the "vagabonds"

[218] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[219] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[220] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

Drucker describes. With the stability of a continuous, year-round paycheck, a position in an orchestra like the New York Philharmonic became increasingly desirable. Once it was possible to make a living playing in a symphony orchestra, a new, younger generation of musicians began to actively conceive of such jobs as objectives, rather than simply fallback situations, or temporary engagements. Representative of this different mentality, violist Kenneth Mirkin, a Brooklyn native who joined the Philharmonic in 1982, declares:

> When I was in school I just knew that the job that I always wanted was to get into a symphony orchestra, especially the New York Philharmonic. And so I was very lucky in that, as soon as I graduated, there happened to be a viola opening in the New York Philharmonic, and that was the job I wanted, that I just considered to be my job. I really wanted that and so I had just practiced for years and years in Juilliard to win an orchestra audition, especially this one. About five months out of school I took the audition, and nobody got the job….And then about another five or six months later, they held another round of auditions, and that time I won the job and that's how I got in.[221]

Mirkin's great sense of accomplishment at having achieved his aspiration exemplifies the new ways of thinking and prioritizing that still strike other members of the Philharmonic as rather incongruous. As violinist Yoko Takebe marvels:

> I teach orchestra repertoire class. There were no such classes, no subject, when *I* was a student. Now the auditions are becoming much more structured….and more people are interested. They *want* to get the good orchestra jobs….When I was a student, I wasn't aware of anybody studying violin just to get into an orchestra. It's almost like you'd get laughed at: "My goal is to get into an orchestra?" I mean, nobody said that, but really that's very different. A job like the New York Philharmonic, a big orchestra, that's considered a *great* job.[222]

[221] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

[222] Yoko Takebe, interview by author, June 9, 2010.

While some may still find a stigma attached to "settling" for an orchestral position, Principal Cello Carter Brey's career can demonstrate just how much the status of the Philharmonic community has changed in the decades following the advent of full-time employment. Long before joining the Philharmonic in 1996, he had built up an impressive resume as a soloist and chamber musician, receiving a prize at the Rostropovich International Cello Competition, the Gregor Piatigorsky Memorial Prize, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and numerous other accolades. It did not, however, go unquestioned when a musician of such caliber opted to accept an orchestral appointment. He offers a candid rationale for his career trajectory:

> I was contacted at home by the general manager, who told me that Lorne Munroe was leaving the post and asked if I'd be interested in auditioning. And I thought it over, discussed it with my wife, and thought it would be a good idea….When I joined the Philharmonic and accepted this position, there was some surprise in certain quarters. Some people thought I was out of my mind. And yet, on the other hand, joining a prestigious organization like this confers upon you a sort of immediate cachet. You're no longer just Joe Schmo, you're Joe Schmo, the Principal Sackbut player of the New York Philharmonic, which, the name itself, has a certain kind of resonance for just about every educated American and many, many people abroad as well, particularly in Europe and Asia. So, while on the one hand, I experienced a certain amount of incomprehension at the beginning, it's been nice to sort of plug into the great respect and appreciation that comes with belonging to something that's greater than yourself.[223]

It is clear that Brey was attracted to both the stability and the esteem attached to his role as Principal Cello of the New York Philharmonic. In turn, the presence of such a renowned musician as a permanent member of the orchestra would serve to attract more talented newcomers. In joining this full-time institution, then, these members would need to acclimate to the obligations that had come along with the steady paycheck.

[223] Carter Brey, interview by author, April 13, 2011.

The Workload

> The year-round season created a better lifestyle, a better condition. One could really plan their lives a little better knowing that you were getting a paycheck every week. And the times were such that, having the new center, Lincoln Center, drew people from around the world. We had full houses. It was an exciting situation. Of course, they had to fill 52 weeks with *something*….There were still tours of all kinds and there were open air concerts in the city parks….It was, I would say, an exciting prospect because having to be a year-round orchestra required an awful lot of flexibility, going from one thing to another.[224]

It is not surprising that Drucker describes the new reality of full-time Philharmonic life in such positive terms. Rarely without his clarinet in his hands, he clearly relished any additional opportunities to do what he had always done, but now with the additional benefit of financial security. He summarizes:

> When I was starting out there in New York, it was a 28-week season….so that was the much easier situation. People had a lot of free time. Of course, a lot of them didn't want the free time. They had to pay their bills for 52 weeks. So over the years it evolved into what it is today, which is a very full, busy schedule, and a hard-working one, but that's the nature of this situation.[225]

Deak, an unusually active member of the Philharmonic for 40 years, defines "busy" from a distinctly different vantage point:

> What you had in the '60s was a transition from what was essentially a part-time job, or what [Principal Bass] Johnny Schaeffer used to describe as a "gentleman's job." In other words, you had to have another job. You couldn't support yourself and your family on just the Philharmonic, especially during the summer….In the '60s, with the Bernstein rush and the season expanded, my predecessors won…a 52-week contract, but many more concerts were played. So it was a tradeoff. And the workload

[224] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[225] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 9, 2011.

> was, I found, basically impossible. You couldn't keep up your own personal artistic standards because, between a rehearsal and a concert you can touch up maybe and work on a part a little bit, but you cannot practice three or four hours a day like I was used to before I joined the Philharmonic. You just cannot do it….My instrument's very physical….
>
> The workload itself was just simply too heavy. Then later in the Mehta years….the workload gradually evened out, through the '80s and '90s, to what it is today: much more equitable….And in my case…I had two careers going on at the same time: composer full-time, performer full-time….But that's why we come to New York, to be busy and involved in our lives and art. We're busy. So I think the workload evening out has led to an increase in the artistic level of the individual player of the Philharmonic. That's the bottom line.[226]

Though he cites improvements he was gratified to both experience and witness over the course of his career, Deak's account of the demands placed upon orchestral musicians underscores the paradox that, just as these positions became more lucrative and competitive, they could, in many instances, also prove overwhelming. It was very possible that membership in an elite orchestra could lead to a succession of seemingly endless rehearsals, concerts, and other obligations, eventually curtailing artistic growth and resulting in a different, but equally disquieting, specter of disgruntlement borne of stagnation rather than economic uncertainty.

In a 1996 interview conducted by Paul R. Judy for *Harmony, Forum of the Symphony Orchestra Institute*, J. Richard Hackman, a Harvard University psychology professor, discussed a study regarding "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras," which he had undertaken with Jutta Allmendinger from the University of Munich and Erin Lehman from Harvard:

> Over the last decade, my colleagues and I have administered job attitude surveys to people in a wide variety of groups and organizations….[For] the first question, the level of internal motivation, symphony orchestra musicians are pushing the top of the scale….No group or organization…scores higher. Orchestra players are, indeed, fueled by

[226] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

> their own pride and professionalism….For general satisfaction, orchestra players rank seventh among the 13 groups studied [below "Mental health treatment teams," "Airline flight attendants," and "Federal prison guards"]. And for satisfaction with growth opportunities, orchestra players rank ninth….
>
> It's a bit ironic. Players in symphony orchestras are near the top of their professions—they are among the handful of talented musicians who actually are able to make a living as performers. And no group we have studied has greater internal motivation than these people. Yet their overall job satisfaction, and especially their satisfaction with opportunities for continued growth and development, are not pushing the top of the scale. The professional symphony orchestra, it seems, does not provide as rich and rewarding an occupational setting for musicians as one would hope.[227]

No less an authority figure than Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow is quite frank about what kind of commitment is required of anyone attempting to pursue an orchestral career. Having served as the "face" of the Philharmonic community since 1980, he reflects, in particular, about how his additional role as teacher has carried over into his influential leadership position:

> Once a former student or a current student gets into the orchestra, they become not a student anymore but my colleague, and I try to receive them differently. I always feel very *proud* and fatherly toward them, and I always try to nurture so much as I can, realizing that, if it's somebody very young, there's a learning curve. The kind of schedule that we have here is absolutely insane, where there's so much material to learn every week: rehearsing something on a Tuesday morning, performing it in front of 3,000 people two days later. Very often even the standard works are being played by these people for the first time. So there's a lot of nurturing by not just me, but other people who have experience. I think it's a collegial thing that exists in our orchestra and, I'm sure, others. But as far as that is concerned, I always have great respect for those people who have taken this audition, which is so impossibly hard to get and to get through. Our standards are *so* very high. [228]

[227] Paul R. Judy, "Life and Work in Symphony Orchestras: An Interview with J. Richard Hackman," *Harmony*, no. 2 (April 1996), 3-5.

[228] Glenn Dicterow, interview by author, March 3, 2010.

In addition to having to tackle what Dicterow pegs as an "insane" schedule, members of the Philharmonic often have to balance preconceived notions with prosaic routines. As Mirkin posits:

> I think there are a lot of people who may be dissatisfied with the direction that their careers took, especially, maybe, in instruments like the violin, where people started out thinking that they were going to have great solo careers, and then they took a job in a symphony orchestra for a few years until their career took off, and then they find themselves 40 years later still sitting there. So I think some of those people end up being very frustrated. When you play the viola, you know you're going to either play in a string quartet or an orchestra. You don't have any delusions about being a solo violist unless you're crazy. And so these were the jobs that we wanted and, sure, it's not necessarily fabulous every day you go into work. You sometimes have to play with conductors you don't like, and music you don't like, but I still have to say that I'm very glad I'm here.[229]

Realistically, as Clive Gillinson and Jonathan Vaughan caution in "The Life of an Orchestral Musician" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra* from 2003:

> The life of an orchestral musician can be highly rewarding, challenging and exciting, but is just as likely to be frustrating, exhausting and unfulfilling….[Most] people take up music professionally because they have artistic aspirations, whereas their orchestral role is largely that of an artisan. Artistic creativity lies primarily with conductors and soloists….Those who fail to develop creative outlets often find that the inherent tension of an artist working primarily as an artisan leads to frustration and a lack of personal growth and creativity. [230]

A commonality between the careers of Mirkin and Deak is that, while able to comprehend why other members of the orchestra might find the workload antithetical to their own ambitions, they chose to involve themselves with various specific aspects of Philharmonic

[229] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

[230] Clive Gillinson and Jonathan Vaughan, "The Life of an Orchestral Musician" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 194.

life that helped them to find personal fulfillment: committee work and educational outreach, respectively. Indeed, as full-time professionals, Philharmonic members can elect to use their own personal skills in a variety of "creative outlets" if they intend to remain more well-rounded, and less dissatisfied, orchestral musicians.

The Committee Community

> As soon as I received tenure, which is the earliest you can get on a committee, I got on just about every committee I could. I did every contract negotiation since 1985, and the Tour Committee, and the Pension Committee. I just felt like it just kept that part of my brain stimulated. I mean, I love to play music and play the viola, but there's a certain part of you that you have to surrender when you play in an orchestra. When you're being part of a group, you have to blend, and you don't get to have much input yourself. Your job is to be a bit more on the passive side, and to just be a good cog in the machinery there. I still have a part of me that's very independent, and I like to voice my opinions and to think for myself, and so I was able to express that by doing a lot of work on the committees and being involved in everything. And I just didn't like just to have things happen and be handed down to me. I wanted to be able to be involved in the whole process, so it's been something that's been very rewarding for me over all these years. [231]

Mirkin's rationale for his enduring commitment to committee work reveals that previously cited longing to find ways to maintain individuality within a sometimes constraining and relentless schedule. Being able to express himself vocally, by weighing in on logistical issues that affect the entire Philharmonic, serves as a complement to the more homogenized musical support he provides as a violist in the orchestra. Indeed, it seems that he is able to find deeper artistic satisfaction through embracing a career that demonstrates the importance of small sub-communities within the all-encompassing New York Philharmonic community. For over 25

[231] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

years, Mirkin has been a member of not only the Philharmonic community, but also the viola community, and a variety of even smaller committee communities. He depicts the members of these committees as highly motivated and largely self-selecting:

> It's really just a simple nominating process and then an election by the orchestra. Sometimes it just ends up being by default because it's a *lot* of work and not everybody wants to do it. So it's often the same people who end up doing it year after year and…sometimes it's just been a rubber stamp: We have five people on a committee, and we've gotten five people to run, and so they get elected. Other years, we've actually had some more competition to get on the committee and so then we just go through a secret ballot, and the people who win the most votes are the ones who end up on the committee.[232]

Mirkin indicates that the tradeoff for the extra effort required can be satisfying, explaining that his especial involvement in contract negotiations stems from the fact that:

> It directly affects our working conditions so this way I don't feel like I'm just being helpless in just showing up to work and just having a schedule handed to me….I feel that I'm working for the greater good of the orchestra and fixing things in our work conditions that may not be artistically desirable. I remember my first year on the Negotiating Committee was 1985, and we had just come off two *brutal* tours….That really made me desire to change those conditions, and during those negotiations we limited the number of days on tour and the number of services we could work in any particular week….After that…at least we feel like we can get through the tour and artistically be our best during it. So I was very proud of that negotiation. [233]

Committee membership can serve as a means toward creative expression while also providing a greater sense of purpose beyond performing as necessary to earn a paycheck. Sherry Sylar, for instance, who joined the Philharmonic in 1984, describes her position as Associate

[232] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

[233] Ibid.

Principal Oboe as "a big job and a lot of work."[234] Yet, she chose to take on additional duties, serving on the Artistic Advisory Committee, which enabled her to play a role in the selection of Kurt Masur and Lorin Maazel as music directors. She declares:

> I think it behooves every person in the orchestra to sort of do their civic duty, if you will, and serve on these committees. I've done the Chamber Music Committee for many, many years. I've been on the Orchestra Committee during a contract negotiation. I've done three terms. I'm now currently serving another term on the Artistic Advisory Committee. I was on a New Music Committee. So I really try to stand behind my belief that everybody should take part so that, if you have to complain about something, you at least have had a voice in it.[235]

Such ideals are echoed by Deak, who was also involved in Masur's appointment, and who connects the committee communities with the surrounding New York community:

> I think the committee work came as a natural expression of moving to New York….I came from the Midwest and was absolutely appalled and mortified to speak in any public way….I was not disposed to talking in front of people and certainly not at a boardroom or in front of an audience….I lived in Italy for a year and that got me involved in world affairs. So when I came to New York, I became politically involved in housing fights, antiracist struggles. I became sociologically involved, let's say. And so it kind of became natural for me to join the Orchestra Committee. I only was on one or two Negotiating Committees. After that, I was on the Artistic Advisory Committee for maybe a decade almost. And that was a lot of fun. I actually led it for a while and that was good.[236]

Although committee work can hold great appeal for certain Philharmonic musicians, as Mirkin suggested, one must possess the right kind of mentality and inclination to seek out

[234] Sherry Sylar, interview by author, March 2, 2011.

[235] Ibid.

[236] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

membership in those groups. Not surprisingly, with his fiery personality, Mansfield emphasizes that his committee involvement predated joining the New York Philharmonic:

> I started that in Pittsburgh, which was in 1956, '55, when there were *no* committees and we had an illegal organization, which pressured our union into getting us a 15-percent raise in the contract in one year. So by the time I came to the Philharmonic, I had been baptized in that type of thing and I joined committees very quickly. I think by 1962 I was on committee already, and I stayed on for many, many years….We increased the pension tremendously and we got medical services. We started getting *paid* vacations. And, of course, we went to the 52-week season….All of these things happened during the times when I was on committee.[237]

Mirkin, Sylar, Deak, and Mansfield are all proud of their status as members of these committees and the ways they have made a difference for the lives of the entire Philharmonic community. Not all musicians seeking additional creative opportunities are intrinsically drawn to the same kinds of activities, however, as Drucker admits:

> I would consider myself non-political in the orchestral scheme of things. I was too busy playing. And I wasn't suited to committee duties because one had to really be a very good speaker and a firebrand and really immerse yourself in that world….[238]
>
> So I always steered clear of that kind of thing. Though I was very cooperative in extra-curricular playing: speaking to young people's audiences, and visiting schools, and taking part in chamber music and in extra concerts.[239]

Though Drucker was never inclined to pursue committee membership, he identifies two other avenues through which Philharmonic musicians can find "extra-curricular" satisfaction: educational outreach and chamber music.

[237] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[238] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[239] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

Education: Harnessing the Inner Bernstein

> Children's concerts, youth concerts, family concerts—these are the terms variously used to describe what has long been the mainstay of orchestras' educational activities. They pre-date the late twentieth century's preoccupations and come from a time when a background in the arts was considered mandatory and desirable. However, when most of us think about these concerts today, we still tend to associate them with what is now considered a golden era of Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic's Young People's Concerts….Of course, even if Bernstein were alive and presenting Children's Concerts today, he would undoubtedly have to make some alterations….The young audiences for whom Bernstein performed still had some music in their general educations and will have been at least aware of the names of a few composers….By the end of the twentieth century, however, these composers…and symphony orchestras, were not even on the radar screens of the general youth population. So the challenge is not only to find 'the next Leonard Bernstein,' but also to find ways to prepare young audiences for the experience of hearing a symphony orchestra.[240]

In writing about "Educational Programmes" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra,* Sue Knussen reinforces the worldwide correlation between the New York Philharmonic and concerts for young people, still stemming from the exalted memories of the 53 such programs conducted by Bernstein between 1958 and 1972. Though the series long predated Bernstein's tenure as music director, stretching back to 1923, his charismatic presence, and ability to reach unprecedented numbers of viewers through television, made finding "the next Leonard Bernstein" an especially bedeviling dilemma for his former orchestra, as the concerts continued after his reign. As Knussen raises additional educational issues, though, one can begin to envision the kinds of opportunities ripe for development for members of the Philharmonic in Bernstein's absence:

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[240] Sue Knussen, "Educational Programmes" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 243-44.

> Life in a symphony orchestra, while artistically enriching and relatively lucrative, can have its drawbacks for talented instrumentalists….When they become part of a symphony orchestra…they enter a society of equals, but one in which it can be difficult, especially for string players and for players in second or third chair positions in the wind and brass and percussion sections, to shine. They sometimes begin to feel like cogs in a complex machine in which the real recognition is reserved for the principal players and…the conductor. After all the years of training and countless hours of practice, they can sometimes feel invisible. When they go out into the schools, however, they often rediscover their musical individuality and find a new artistic and communicative outlet. [241]

Knussen's implication that educational outreach not only benefits the intended audience but can also provide a sense of rejuvenation for the players is substantiated by Drucker's thoughts about how Bernstein changed the Young People's Concerts at the New York Philharmonic:

> Every orchestra played Young People's Concerts from their beginnings. There always was the hope that maybe some of the young kids would grow into regular concertgoers. They were sort of simple programs with simple text, where they would say, "Look at the flute," or, "This is the tuba," things that really didn't break any new ground. With Bernstein, Young People's Concerts were [broadcast] live and it's amazing that they were. And they kept working on the script and the text right to the very moment that the "go" light came on, so there was an immediacy to it. They were on a very high level academically and intellectually….It was a new world. It spoke straight to all ages without talking down to anybody…. [242]

> Those television concerts started very early, and we had to be onstage ready to play, fresh as a daisy, at 8 A.M., which is a pretty early hour for anybody in *that* business. And the excitement of getting a cue sheet and a partial script, and having the changes made, and then having the music bracketed so that you didn't play past the moment that he wanted you to play, so everything cut off together and started together: It required complete immersion. I would say everybody in the orchestra was really a part of that. There was no such thing as the front desks and the back desks

[241] Knussen, "Educational Programmes," 246-47.

[242] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

> having a wide gulf, because everybody was responsible for the quality and the expertise and professionalism of that. In the old days, I think it was Mitropoulos who said, "Some of the people sitting in the back don't think they're in the orchestra."[243]

Considering how easily Bernstein could summon up a stimulating atmosphere for the Philharmonic community, it is logical to wonder how the Young People's Concerts would fare without such a pied piper.

As both a composer and a performer, Deak possesses an especially broad musical background, which led him to eventually step into the educational breach left in Bernstein's wake, a fitting example of resourcefulness that further emphasizes the conductor's far-reaching Philharmonic legacy. Deak recalls:

> The Young People's Concerts were what got me into music and into New York. I grew up and watched Bernstein on the TV, at that time a very new medium. This was the late 1950s, and I was entranced….He was like a God and I was maybe 14 years old, or some age like that….And then to come to New York and see this same guy, because he conducted the Young People's Concerts for three years when I came here. He still was conducting. To see it behind the camera the way that I had seen it in front of the camera before, to see *how* it was put together: I was in tears half the time after those concerts….He was my idol.[244]

Fortuitously for the Philharmonic, having been so inspired by Bernstein, Deak discovered his own knack for reaching children and found it impossible to passively witness the steadily dwindling standing of the Young People's Concerts after 1972. He concedes:

> After Bernstein left, there was, unfortunately, an immediate and horrible downslide in the quality of the Young People's Concerts….And I don't think that, in a sense, they have ever really regained the importance for the

[243] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[244] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

> public at large. However, the quality has improved dramatically. I did write some scripts for them in the '80s (or at least helped to do so) and the '90s, usually when they would do a piece of mine on there. Because some of my pieces relate to children, so I did have several things done and enjoyed working on scripts there because I began to do that with other orchestras.[245]

The efforts to return these concerts to their former level did not go unnoticed. On December 15, 1992, Edward Rothstein offered a lengthy assessment of a recent Young People's Concert in *The New York Times*, writing about "Leading the Young Down a Percussive Path":

> The first sign that the New York Philharmonic was taking an entirely new approach to its Young People's Concerts was the yellow plastic paths mapped out on the promenade of Avery Fisher Hall….They were…inscribed with lines from the score from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the first work the orchestra played at its founding concert 150 years ago. "Follow the yellow clef road…" read the leaflet….This was the first Children's Promenade….scheduled before each Young People's Concert this season….And throughout the hall, players from the orchestra…bent down to the children's height…engaged in conversation and signed autograph cards….[This] prelude was a terrific enterprise. The orchestra was brought closer to the children; the players became human….It was probably the most imaginative and ambitious undertaking by the Young People's Concerts since the days when Leonard Bernstein introduced a generation of children to the orchestra.
>
> Last season, it was clear that something had to be done to improve these events, which have been slighted in recent years….The Philharmonic has made a dramatic first step in courting this neglected constituency….The concert closed with Jon Deak's composition "New York, 1842: A City on Fire," commissioned in honor of the orchestra's 150th birthday….It is heartening to see money and inventiveness directed toward an audience that requires even more cultivation than ordinary subscribers….This concert provided the first step for reaching so devoted an audience, allowing the Philharmonic to become human rather than austerely distant.[246]

[245] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

[246] Edward Rothstein, "Leading the Young Down a Percussive Path," *The New York Times*, December 15, 1992.

All that is missing from Rothstein's wholehearted endorsement of the interaction between musicians and children is the additional insight as to just how fulfilling such opportunities were for the players themselves. Indeed, since it would have been impossible to find one focal authority figure to even attempt to become "the next Bernstein" in the decades following his departure, Deak instead helped provide the guidance for members of the Philharmonic to follow his lead and harness their own inner Bernstein. While continuing to channel his energy into engaging children to experiment with works of their own as founder of the Very Young Composers program, Deak became the Philharmonic's Creative Education Associate. His involvement remained so strong that, following his retirement in 2009, he was appointed the Young Composer Advocate of the New York Philharmonic. The culmination of his "bottom-up" undertakings was the creation of a brand new series of Very Young People's Concerts in 2005. In describing its origins, Deak evidently felt privileged to witness the ingenuity and excitement of his fellow Philharmonic members uniting to devise ways to reach an impressionable audience:

> We began to be concerned that the Young People's Concerts are prominently advertised as for kids age six to twelve, but people would inevitably bring in the two-, three-, four-year-olds, and they have trouble sitting through those things, so there's a noise factor….So we started with a committee from the orchestra, which included myself, but I was already fully involved in the Very Young Composers, so I let others take the lead, but I was on the committee and watched it grow beautifully. Some of those people who never really took an active part in administrative roles and creative roles in the orchestra were able to say, "Oh, well, kids would like this. Let's play *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, only do it like this, and then you say that and you get up and demonstrate the viola: This demonstrates loud, and this is soft. This is high, this is low."
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> They develop their own curriculum and programming, scriptwriting. It was not done by an outside expert because there really were no outside experts. And I'm just so proud of my colleagues, that they have done this thing….We keep the actual program very short, and before and after are main events, like what some orchestras call a petting zoo, where you get to touch the instruments and all that, which is very essential. And people

> have quiz shows and hands-on things that kids enjoy. They've been so successful. I'm very, very proud that that's going on.[247]

That sense of pride is common among members of the Philharmonic who have decided to devote time to these Very Young People's Concerts. Cellist Qiang Tu, who came to the United States from China in 1987 and joined the orchestra in 1995, has been a part of the series from the beginning. He explains why he responded to the initial form requesting volunteers and the kind of considerations that go into the planning:

> I have two girls. They're not young anymore. My older one is already in the college; my younger one is in the second year of high school. I love kids….I want to do something for the kids. The kids are our future, no matter if it's the U.S. or the world. I think we cannot leave this world without classical music. If I can add a little bit to this educational program, it will make me very happy….
>
> I think the first few years was a little bit difficult because it's for the *very* young kids—What can we do? We did like to show them fast, slow, allegro, adagio, forte, piano, soft, high, low, and all kinds of things. It was really difficult because, basically, this program, it's only 30 minutes. In this 30 minutes, how much could young kids take?…Each time, each program, each year, we have to talk about how we put the things together, how we make it go smoothly. There's a regular program and, before the regular program there's activities, and also after….We all work together.[248]

Tu suggests that striving to inspire youngsters not only helps remind the musicians why they originally entered the field, but also engenders a strong sense of camaraderie and, as with committees in general, community. As Deak is quick to note, though, the kind of devotion Tu describes was not always the case, and actually represents another example of the new kind of mentality displayed by more recent additions to the orchestra:

[247] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

[248] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

> The Philharmonic is an ideal place for this. I mean, people are just so involved. They love education. It was not like that when I joined. That's one of the other big changes in the orchestra: the attitude of the orchestra members toward what you might call education or working with children. Those old guys never wanted to work with kids. That was considered not desirable. Now they love it. All I have to do is say, "Hey, would you like to demonstrate your instrument for these kids?" and they come running. They demonstrate the trombone and say, "Here, put your mouth here," or, "Put your hand here." So the kids get to experience the instruments hands-on.[249]

Deak's observations about a changing of the guard in the educational realm seem to mirror larger American societal trends toward more equitable parenting responsibilities. It is not at all surprising that the notion of interacting with youngsters would have seemed foreign and unappealing to many members of the predominantly male Philharmonic Deak first experienced in the 1970s. Over his four decades in the orchestra, however, as the role of men within families morphed from the old *Father Knows Best* model persisting from the 1950s and *The Donna Reed Show* of the 1960s to *Family Ties* and *Growing Pains* of the 1980s, attitudes of both male and female members of the Philharmonic may have changed accordingly, as Tu's references to his daughter suggest. For whatever confluence of reasons, by the time both Deak and Drucker left the Philharmonic in 2009, the overall nature of musician involvement in educational issues had fundamentally evolved. Whereas in Drucker's earlier decades, Bernstein had managed to captivate both his audience and the mostly male members of the Philharmonic with his Young People's Concerts, in later years, Deak helped oversee more autonomous enterprises, encouraging individual players, of both genders, to creatively and directly engage with prospective future ticket-buyers.

[249] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

Chamber Music and New Beginnings

> This history of playing chamber music with Philharmonic colleagues goes back a long way, back into the '50s, when a group was formed. Actually, the Philharmonic had played an engagement at the Roxy Theatre two years in a row, where we played four short concerts a day interspersed with the film. And, in between two of those concerts, there was a meeting that a violinist and violist…called, to speak about forming a Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble. An official group had never been formed before but some people were interested. I would say the most important person that was interested was Dimitri Mitropoulos, who was music director at the time. He really was in favor of it and he supported it: financially and with his actual appearance as a conductor or pianist in a work or two….[250]
>
> We got to play a lot of new music….It really filled a certain void that had existed with just playing orchestra rehearsals and concerts. It challenged the players and it certainly pulled together people that wanted to do that. Maybe some of the people that were there in the Philharmonic a long time, that were just into orchestral playing from their days in…Europe weren't interested at the time, perhaps, but a lot of the players were. And it was well-attended….So you really got exposure to a wide audience, and it was something that you looked forward to. You worked hard and you enjoyed those performances. They were more than concerts. They were events.[251]

In his description of the original Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble as a group devised by orchestra members between performances at the Roxy Theatre in September 1950 and May 1951, Drucker stresses both the importance of these smaller, collaborative playing opportunities and the novelty of the concept. Indeed, while the members of the Philharmonic community who chose to join this new chamber community had secured the music director's approval, they were apparently met with resistance from a contingent of more old-fashioned orchestra members unaccustomed to and uncomfortable with such musician independence. Nevertheless, a *New York Times* review, "New Unit Presents Chamber Concert," published on February 11, 1952, calls attention to the potential benefits for the participants:

[250] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 7, 2009.

[251] Ibid.

> Orchestral musicians often want to set out on their own, and last night members of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony began an independent venture. Thirty of them have formed the Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble, which gave its first concert at the Lexington Avenue Y.M. and Y.W.H.A. It was a distinct success….
>
> One reason instrumentalists have an itch to play on their own is because they grow tired of conductors reaping all the glory. Last night the men had a conductor for the two pieces where he was needed….He was none other than Dimitri Mitropoulos, but he reversed the usual order of things. In his willingness to help the ensemble start its series and in the modesty of his demeanor, it was plain he wasn't a conductor having the men play for him. He was a conductor leading for the men.[252]

While those early concerts were strongly connected with the presence of Mitropoulos, the spark that he helped ignite remained strong within the Philharmonic long after his tenure ended in 1958. As Drucker remembers it, "one decade just morphed into another. I would say there wasn't the end of one [series] and the beginning of another, in a certain sense, because, basically, the people that wanted to play chamber music played it."[253] However, much of that playing was purely ad hoc, as the officially sanctioned "Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble" of the Mitropoulos era had become defunct. Formally resurrecting such a series in 1983—three decades after it first came into being—became one of the hallmarks of Zubin Mehta's tenure as music director, as trumpeted in the valedictory publication *New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years*:

> Eight years ago Zubin Mehta initiated a program that has become a cherished tradition: The New York Philharmonic Ensembles, whose annual six-concert series now has its home, and its own enthusiastic following, at Merkin Concert Hall. Spearheaded by an active Orchestra Committee, which determines all aspects of programming, the Ensembles

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[252] R.P., "New Unit Presents Chamber Group," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1952.

[253] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 7, 2009.

> have received wide exposure at home and on tour, and have involved more than 90 percent of the Orchestra's membership.[254]

Though initially launched by the music director, and publicized with his imprimatur, the lasting significance of what Mehta set into motion was the creation of an enduring and vital artistic outlet for the players. Drucker clarifies:

> When this new ensemble started up, it was a volunteer situation, plus the players suggested the repertoire, and it was sifted through and planned and put together properly. I think it's been a healthy situation because it broadens the player's vision of what it *can* be to perform. And it teaches people how to walk out on a stage, how to bow, how to walk off. You learn a whole concert etiquette. You just don't learn a piece. You could do that in somebody's living room. But here you're playing on a real stage for an audience, and you're playing music that you don't play on the big stage. In fact, you're close to the audience. You see the faces; you see the expressions.[255]

For members of the Philharmonic community, required to perform music chosen from "up above" in the exact manner dictated by an authority figure on the podium on a daily, and nightly, year-round basis, these opportunities to form smaller communities, focus on works of personal interest, and receive direct audience response proved to be invaluable. In fact, in a December 1984 *New York Times* review of "Ensembles In Concert," Bernard Holland observed: "What began last year as a recreation—even a therapy—for players in the Philharmonic blossomed into something more serious…."[256]

As this series started by Mehta has continued unabated for over 25 years, it has drawn in

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[254] *New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years, A Tribute to Zubin Mehta*, 37.

[255] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 7, 2009.

[256] Bernard Holland, "Music: Ensembles In Concert," *The New York Times*, December 4, 1984.

and become a source of empowerment for many younger members of the Philharmonic eager to partake of those therapeutic benefits, like Sylar, who stresses:

> The chamber music series that we have is very important to me. It's a different kind of playing and it also enhances your orchestral playing. I'm in a professional quintet that was started out with members of the orchestra….Our group is called the Philharmonic Quintet of New York. We got together, primarily, because we enjoyed each other's company and we enjoyed making music with each other. As it turned out, it gave us so much more than fun and games. It was a learning experience. And because of how much time we spent together in the quintet, playing in the orchestra has become a lot easier because we know the tendencies of one another and how to sort of accommodate and adjust. It just makes orchestra life so much easier.[257]

As Sylar explains, being granted leeway to perform outside the Philharmonic can only reap additional advantages when returning to the orchestra, both through increased individual satisfaction and a greater sense of being attuned to colleagues. The rewards she has found by collaborating more extensively with members of her own section of the orchestra have served as similar incentive for the presentation of concerts by the "New York Philharmonic Brass" that were featured as part of the summer parks series in 2004 and 2006. Trombonist David Finlayson, who joined the orchestra in 1985, describes the internal motivation for those periodic performances:

> I think there's been a push within the brass section….It's a way of giving the strings and winds a break. They don't have to play a concert then. It's a way of featuring what we think is one of the strongest parts of the Philharmonic. It's a way to introduce a whole different library of music that the public would not normally hear or reach out to hear. I think brass music in the United States has a long tradition: big bands, marching bands….and, of course, we're sort of an extension of that in some way. I

[257] Sherry Sylar, interview by author, March 2, 2011.

> think it's come from the brass section, those ideas. We've pushed and put ourselves forward.[258]

This desire to perform in smaller groups with fellow members of the Philharmonic provides evidence of the inherent ability of chamber music to stimulate camaraderie, one of the many factors Tu cites when discussing his reasons for becoming such an active participant in the Philharmonic Ensembles series:

> I always love to play chamber music. I try to keep and to remain at the highest level as possible. If you just keep playing in the orchestra, sometimes you *could* lose a good ability to hear your own sound, your own voice. And to play chamber music, for me, I have to force myself to practice. That's the one main reason I do the chamber music in the Philharmonic, and also outside the Philharmonic. Playing with my colleagues in the orchestra, it's a great opportunity for me to learn something from them, and also enjoy sharing the musical ideas with each other….Basically, we have to organize our own group, pick our own pieces. Our Chamber Music Committee has to try to manage the program, pick wisely for the program, and also pick wisely for the musicians.[259]

As Tu draws connections between the musician initiative involved in the committee work that enables the perpetuation of these chamber music concerts, the need to continually hone one's skills, and the pedagogical nature of such collaborations, one can begin to appreciate why Drucker considers himself lucky to have been part of the first, original, Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble in 1952. For, as he puts it: "There hadn't been anything like that….It was a beginning. It was a new start, a new era for musicians of the orchestra."[260] Ten years later, the

[258] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

[259] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

[260] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 9, 2011.

move to Philharmonic Hall would bring about another new beginning, only to be followed by the most significant development of all: full-time employment.

Surely, the 19-year-old clarinetist who joined the Philharmonic in 1948 would have been baffled by the scenario portrayed by Arthur Lubow's "Orchestral Maneuvers in the Dark" in *The New York Times* of June 27, 2004: "In 1964, the New York Philharmonic was the first orchestra to provide its musicians with a 52-week contract. Today, with a base salary of about $100,000, nine weeks of paid vacation, enviably complete medical benefits and a pension that kicks in at age 70½ (even if they continue to perform), the Philharmonic musicians are living the unionist's dream."[261] By the time Drucker retired in 2009, the appellation of "orchestral musician" had long ceased to carry any negative connotations. Membership in the New York Philharmonic had come to confer not only financial security but great prestige as well. As these artists continue to forge ahead in the 21st century, they now bear the responsibility of exploring the variety of existing opportunities to make the best, and most complete, use of their talents, in order to be more than what Mirkin insightfully refers to as merely "a good cog in the machinery."[262]

[261] Arthur Lubow, "Orchestral Maneuvers in the Dark," *The New York Times*, June 27, 2004.

[262] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

Chapter 3: Philharmonic Commissions

> Programming is a profession and an art….There has to be a lot of the "permanent collection," because one goes to any museum and you want to see the old masters. But you also want to see the Impressionists and the avant-garde and what's far-out and everything in between. I think it's the same thing with music, especially in the large music centers of the world, where there's an audience for every type of art. So one has to be able to have run the gamut from very traditional to the just-born. It's really a learning experience for an audience and for the people doing those works. It's absolutely essential.[263]

In his consideration of the variety of works performed by the New York Philharmonic over the course of his career, Stanley Drucker's reliance upon metaphors helps shed light upon the eternal debate regarding the delicate balancing act every symphony orchestra must face season after season. While he realizes the necessity to perpetuate the so-called standard repertory, he also securely affixes the onus on the Philharmonic to meet the artistic needs of both questing audience members and potentially jaded orchestral musicians longing for novelty. That very label of "museum" has been applied to orchestras in manners both derogatory and hopeful by the endless stream of scholars, critics, and musicians who have tenaciously attempted to formulate the proper role for these institutions. Though this is, by no means, a new issue, it has taken on a greater significance as these ensembles continue to seek new audiences in the 21st century.

As Drucker notes, programming is a complex process. While the act of formulating a concert program is ideally guided by the desire to perform a wide variety of worthy works presented in a meaningful way, economic realities often take precedence over purely artistic visions. Whether or not an orchestra is successfully reaching audience members is typically judged by comparing ticket sales, both for individual concerts and for whole seasons. Just how many new or recent works are included on programs, and how regularly the more familiar

[263] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 23, 2011.

compositions return, is frequently decided in efforts to fill the hall with as many paying customers as possible. Furthermore, if a specific composer is chosen to write a work for an orchestra, that individual's stylistic reputation is customarily scrutinized in order to speculate about how receptive concertgoers might be to potentially similar works.

Drucker's singular Philharmonic tenure allows him to offer programming pronouncements from a rare place of authority. For, while he was granted the standard solo opportunities to perform the "old favorite" works by Mozart and Weber that form the very basis of the clarinet literature, he was also entrusted with the honor of premiering two concertos commissioned for him by the New York Philharmonic. This chapter, "Philharmonic Commissions," will therefore provide an in-depth examination of the genesis and launching of the clarinet concertos by John Corigliano and William Bolcom. In so doing, it will introduce these two extended members of the Philharmonic community and delve into the relationship between composers, performers, and the audience. Along the way, other members of the Philharmonic will contribute different perspectives regarding additional commissions and the general place of contemporary music within orchestral life.

From "Novelties" to "Commissions"

> The object of the Philharmonic Society is the cultivation and performance of instrumental music….I should say that it has conceived its duty primarily to be the conservation of musical compositions which the judgment and taste of the cultured would have admitted to the first rank. Only secondarily has it made propaganda for new and progressive composers who have widened the boundaries of the art. Its patrons have correctly appreciated the relative value of these two phases in its activities. They have never thought of making the demands for new and varied programmes so generally made in the case of other organizations. They attend its concerts to hear grand music grandly performed….The Society is therefore relieved to a great extent of the necessity of casting about for

> novelties. It is also enjoined to exercise the greatest care in the admission of new compositions to its lists. A work that has been played at a Philharmonic concert is, by virtue of that circumstance, looked upon as bearing the most valid stamp of excellence which the New World can bestow. [264]

In his 1892 tome, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial*, Henry Edward Krehbiel's lofty tone left no room for ambiguity as far as the orchestra's proper programming priorities were concerned. Yet, while he was outright dismissive of the relative worth of new works, he did at least acknowledge the contribution of contemporary composers and appreciate the significance of a premiere performance when proffered by a prestigious ensemble. Fifty years later, by 1917, that frosty climate for new music had clearly begun to thaw, as James Gibbons Huneker declared in *The Philharmonic Society of New York and its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospect*:

> We now enjoy all the novelties. We judge the music of men who have still to achieve a solid European reputation. We hear faultlessly interpreted the classics, romantics, the symbolists, futurists and wild men of music. No bogie-man has yet daunted the Society; hissed in Europe, Arnold Schoenberg was here listened to with respect, if not with overwhelming approbation….The Society, while adhering to the rock-bottom of the classics, has welcomed the new, has tested the novel….The Society long ago recognized that variety is the spice of art, and played Brahms and Liszt with equal reverence and enthusiasm. Nor were native born composers…neglected. The programme scheme of the Society is always catholic.[265]

Not only was Huneker proud of the range of contemporary works performed by the Philharmonic, he was even sure to point out the inclusion of Americans on the roster.

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[264] Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial*, 8-9.

[265] Huneker, *The Philharmonic Society of New York and its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: A Retrospect*, 34-35.

In *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*, published in 1943, five years before Drucker joined the Philharmonic, John Erskine blatantly stated: "After a hundred years some concert-goers complain that the Philharmonic-Symphony still presents fewer novelties than it should….The truth probably is that we have had all the novelty we could stand."[266] While such a retort might very well still be heard today, Erskine proceeded to address the larger issue that remains equally relevant:

> Program-making…is something more than selecting a fine piece of music. It must be related to the wishes and needs of the audience, it must also look ahead to the younger generations who will constitute future audiences. The Philharmonic began with Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, which is still, season after season, essential to the repertory. You may think you have heard it often enough…but every year young folks come to the Philharmonic who have not yet heard the Philharmonic play the Beethoven *Fifth*….There is now so much good music to play, and so much curiosity on the part of youth to hear the music which is most talked about, that the conductor, after listing the indispensables, has little room left on his programs. There is here an impasse….New audiences constantly recruited wish to hear the masterpieces at least once, and there are a formidable number of masterpieces. There are also a number of young composers who stand in line for their opportunity, which seems to be shrinking.[267]

As he corroborated the frustration felt by composers desiring greater exposure, he concluded that, "it is natural that our conductors, almost always trained in Europe, should bring to our attention new European composers….It will be increasingly important also to understand the message of those who speak for America…."[268]

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[266] Erksine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*, 42.

[267] Ibid., 42-43.

[268] Ibid., 44.

Nearly twenty years later, in 1962, the New York Philharmonic took a programming leap far beyond merely presenting "novelties," embarking upon its first large-scale series of commissions to celebrate the move to Lincoln Center. The resulting nine works included Copland's *Connotations*, which Bernstein conducted for opening night at Philharmonic Hall on September 23, 1963, as well as contributions from Milhaud, Barber, Poulenc, and Hindemith. After 120 years, as the orchestra took up residency in its new location, it had found a fresh commitment to fostering new music. The upcoming 125th anniversary in 1967 seemed an opportune milestone warranting further commissions. In addition to establishing a pattern of commissioning multiple composers at one time, the series of 19 works premiered between 1967 and 1971 marked the emergence of the New York Philharmonic's most important benefactor, board member Francis Goelet. Indeed, in her study of *Forty Years of Commissioning by the New York Philharmonic 1945-1985*, Karen T. LeFrak notes: "It is historically significant that all of the commissions, with the exception of the first inaugural group…and [a]…few isolated works…were made possible by substantial contributions from one single patron, Francis Goelet. If not for him, one might wonder if the Philharmonic would have been able to realize its commissioning objectives."[269] As chairman of the Goelet Corporation, overseeing a family fortune built upon mining, oil, and gas, this influential philanthropist eventually received a Presidential Medal of the Arts in 1988, and the Philharmonic has continued to benefit from his largesse even after his death in 1998.

[269] Karen T. LeFrak, *Forty Years of Commissioning by the New York Philharmonic 1945-1985* (M.A. thesis, Hunter College, 1986), 4.

John Corigliano: A Composer from the Philharmonic "Family"

> The Philharmonic, with assistance from one of its prominent members of the board, was going to commission some works for the principal players at various points of time. The president of the orchestra then was Carlos Moseley, who approached me at a certain point. He said they wanted to commission a clarinet concerto, and who would I like to have write it? I sort of said, "Leonard Bernstein," and he came back and he said, "He probably is very busy, but we'll approach him." He said, "He may deliver it *after* the performance," as sort of a funny gag. But he came back and he said that Lenny Bernstein had told him that at that time he was too busy to have a concerto ready for the following season, and he recommended John Corigliano. But he said, "I want to conduct it." And that's how it went into the works.[270]

Drucker's account of the origin of John Corigliano's 1977 Clarinet Concerto provides an intriguing introduction to a work that would later come to be regarded as one of the New York Philharmonic's most successful commissions. Yet, it might never have even existed if it were not for both Bernstein's overtaxed agenda and Drucker's abiding faith in the Music Director Laureate's judgment. At that time, Corigliano was a relatively young composer, still shy of 40. Though he may have been somewhat of an unknown entity within the larger classical musical world, he was, however, already an extended member of the Philharmonic community by virtue of lineage. Drucker clarifies:

> I knew him years before when he took some clarinet lessons with me. And, of course, I knew his father, [John Corigliano, Sr.]. Over the years he was a very prominent violinist and he was in the New York Philharmonic for many years, first as Assistant Concertmaster when Mishel Piastro was the Concertmaster, and then *he* became Concertmaster until his retirement from that job. I'd heard that [John Corigliano, Jr.] had gone into composition, but I really wasn't aware of what he'd been doing at that point….I think John always was in the Philharmonic family because of his father.[271]

[270] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, November 20, 2004.

[271] Ibid.

Indeed, the composer was born three years after his violinist father was appointed to the Philharmonic by Toscanini in 1935. While serving as the orchestra's first American-born concertmaster, from 1943 to 1966, the elder Corigliano sat alongside Bruno Walter at Drucker's 1948 audition for the Philharmonic. It was a work John Corigliano, Jr. wrote for his father, his 1962 Violin Sonata, with which he first began to make a name for himself as a composer, garnering a prize at the 1964 Spoleto Festival.

Though the Philharmonic musicians, like Drucker, surely thought of him as part of the "family," receiving a commission from the orchestra brought Corigliano into the community in a completely new way, as part of a novel series that attracted a great deal of publicity for all involved. As Joan Thomson reported in *The New York Times* on November 13, 1977, "The Philharmonic Reaps a Harvest of New Concertos":

> Seeds were planted in the fields of New York's symphonic life last year, and this fall, we are beginning to reap the harvest: four of seven concertos commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for its first-chair players. New concertos are rare, and this series is unprecedented in the 137 year history of the Philharmonic—or in that of any other American orchestra for that matter….Why a sudden concerto crop, vintage 1977, in a world that prefers to ignore new music? Because of the generosity of one man, Francis Goelet.[272]

Besides placing the spotlight on the Philharmonic's own soloists, Goelet was also particularly taken with the notion of contributing to the repertoire for those instruments more in need of such literature, including English horn and viola. That the actual members of the Philharmonic were involved in the selection of the composers further added to the unique nature of this enterprise.

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[272] Joan Thomson, "The Philharmonic Reaps a Harvest of New Concertos," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1977.

Not only had Bernstein served as music director at the end of the elder Corigliano's Philharmonic tenure, but the younger aspiring composer had also worked with him as part of the team producing the Young People's Concerts. Yet, at the time he received his momentous offer from his father's orchestra, he was unaware of Bernstein's involvement. He explains:

> I had no idea. I really didn't. I got a call from the Philharmonic and I thought it was their idea. It's thrilling to know that. And I'm very grateful to Lenny for doing that….I always sent him stuff, so he knew my music. Right after a premiere I would send him a recording and a score….
>
> It was terrifying. The whole experience was terrifying. I felt overwhelmed: the first piece for the New York Philharmonic, with my father there and all those years…the first piece for Bernstein, the piece right after my father died [in 1975], and that whole youthful growing-up, being-a-composer business. And, suddenly, you're on your own and you get that commission. *That* and the Metropolitan Opera—writing your first opera for the 100th anniversary of the Met—were the most traumatic commissions that I've ever had.[273]

Corigliano transferred those feelings of terror to his intended soloist, as Drucker was faced with an emerging work of daunting demands:

> It was scheduled to be performed on a certain date in the future, and there were going to be five performances over a two-week period, with proper rehearsals. And [Corigliano] was, I guess, a slow writer in a certain way, and would disappear so he *could* work and nobody could get to him. I think I received some kind of a *draft* of the first movement at one point. It was in very *rough* handwriting and it looked kind of *scary* because it had an *awful* lot of notes for a single-note instrument like clarinet. After a while, another movement arrived, a slow movement. It was an elegy that he dedicated to the memory of his father and it included, in that movement, a poignant duet with the violin solo and the clarinet solo. I didn't get the final movement until, I don't know, it might have been three or four weeks before the first rehearsal for the piece. He said at the time, before he *closeted* himself with his work, that he wanted to write a work that would include *all* members of the orchestra, because he'd grown up with that orchestra. And he actually *did* that….He used every permanent member of the orchestra in different ways in that score. The last

[273] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

> movement had instruments up in the balconies playing antiphonal things à la Gabrieli.[274]
>
> We had some kind of a piano rehearsal with Bernstein and others at his studio at the Dakota on 72nd Street….Bernstein would conduct some of the phrases; he would talk about this, talk about that. And he, at one point, said to John Corigliano, "You've written a test piece for conductor," because it was so difficult to conduct; there were so many *events* that had to be conducted and cued and had to work in a certain way. And there were a lot of free things. The first movement was basically a bunch of cadenzas and the second movement, as I said, was this soft, slow elegy. The third movement was this antiphonal movement that had a lot of brass whooping it up and used the full range of the solo clarinet, actually even *above* the normal written range for some of these outcries—trills that go way up high.[275]

As Drucker points out, Corigliano had "grown up" with the Philharmonic, and he set about writing a work that was imbued with that connection. Having already composed concertos for piano (1968) and oboe (1975), he had an affinity for the genre, explaining:

> It's very natural to me. In my growing-up years I heard my father rehearse alone, and then with pianists, and then with the orchestra, and then play concertos. He'd do that every year with the Philharmonic. The idea of the single person standing in front of this group of people and having this dialogue in which the single person is able to soar over this entire group even though the group is much more powerful than the single person—the tension and release of that is something I grew up with. It's in my blood….So writing concertos was a very logical thing for me to do because I felt the emotions of the concerto and the balances of the concerto forever.[276]

In this case, he was able to channel his efforts with one especially familiar individual in mind, reflecting: "I *always* knew Stanley. Ever since I was a kid, Stanley was the first clarinetist."[277]

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[274] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, November 20, 2004.

[275] Ibid.

[276] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

[277] Ibid.

Finally, he was also seeking to "discover" what he could "do for [the clarinet] that somebody else has not."[278] He elaborates:

> When I say, "What is a clarinet?" I mean not only "what is the association people have with the clarinet?" but "what is unique about a clarinet in terms of what it can do that other woodwinds or any other instrument can *not* do as well?" So it was finding out, in a sense, all the things you can know emotionally and physically about an instrument.[279]

Drucker feels the end result of all this exploration was "so original that you can't say it was influenced by any *one* particular person. It has its own aura….It's very much his own originality."[280] Furthermore, he views the three movements as "totally *not* connected,"[281] which is in accordance with Corigliano's conception of the use of tonality within his concerto, as he cautions:

> I think that the movements should be placed more than the whole piece. The first movement ["Cadenzas"] *isn't* particularly tonal. When we mean tonal, we're really thinking more, though, of chords that are made on triads—that is, the kind of chords we recognize as simple chords. It really isn't that, there; it has nothing to do with that. There are tonal *centers*, which means that the clarinet and the orchestra gravitate to a single tone as a point of reference, just like on a ruler you have the zero and then you measure up and play other tones. But that doesn't always mean tonal. Certainly, the idea of cadences in the traditional form and all of that sort of thing do not exist.
>
> Whereas the second movement ["Elegy"] *is* quite tonal because it's an elegy in memory of my father and it is a whole different mood and *needs* the anchor of tonality to give birth to the melodies that occur. And the last movement ["Antiphonal Toccata"] combines them both because there are tonal moments in the piece because there's a quote from a Giovanni

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[278] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, November 20, 2004.

[281] Ibid.

> Gabrieli piece—*Sonata Pian e Forte*, the first piece ever to use dynamics in it—and because of that it's very much in a G minor key with several chord progressions. Because that is superimposed against the clarinet playing a 12-tone row, which is not tonal, you have the ambiguity of tonal and non-tonal in the last movement. So I think tonality is used in a sophisticated way in the second movement, in a quoted way—which makes it much simpler—in parts of the last movement, and not particularly in the first movement.[282]

Corigliano, an extended member of the Philharmonic community, had created a work filled with the spirit of the very community that was preparing to introduce the concerto to the larger community of audience and critics alike.

Communication: A Heretical Notion?

> I tried to avoid thinking about the specifics of the date. I tried to be clear, to communicate something as clearly as I can for the public because I believe that music is very hard to understand and the clearer you are, the better chance you have of them understanding *something* of the piece. Because I don't think that anybody can hear a piece—including a trained musician—for the first time and really remember very much about it, and really understand too much about it. So I go for clarity. I try to figure out what I want to say and then I try to figure out how to say it clearly, and that's my job.[283]

Corigliano's stated desire to "communicate" with an audience was remarkably iconoclastic at a time when some composers were steadfastly clinging to tenets that did not allow for any consideration of the public at all. The most famous, or notorious, example of that stance was set out in Milton Babbitt's 1958 *High Fidelity* article, editorially retitled "Who Cares if You Listen?" for greatest impact:

[282] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

[283] Ibid.

> The unprecedented divergence between contemporary serious music and its listeners…and traditional music and its following…is not accidental and—most probably—not transitory. Rather, it is a result of a half-century of revolution in musical thought….The time has passed when the normally well-educated man without special preparation could understand the most advanced work in…mathematics, philosophy, and physics. Advanced music…scarcely can be expected to appear more intelligible than these arts and sciences to the person whose musical education usually has been even less extensive than his background in other fields….
>
> And so, I dare suggest that the composer would do himself and his music an immediate…service by total, resolute, and voluntary withdrawal from this public world to one of private performance and electronic media, with its very real possibility of complete elimination of the public and social aspects of musical composition. By so doing, the separation between the domains would be defined beyond any possibility of confusion of categories, and the composer would be free to pursue a private life of professional achievement, as opposed to a public life of unprofessional compromise and exhibitionism….[Such] a private life is what the university provides the scholar and the scientist. It is only proper that the university…should provide a home for the "complex," "difficult," and "problematical" in music.[284]

That kind of open antagonism not only set those composers off on an entirely separate trajectory from that of general concertgoers, but it also created difficulties for orchestras that could not afford to regularly perform music that might hinder ticket sales. In 1973, Philip Hart defined this dilemma in *Orpheus in the New World: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution:*

> One of the functions of the symphony orchestra undoubtedly is to give exposure to the music of our time, our nation….But perhaps there is an equal obligation of the orchestra to its audience…and of the composer to communicate with the audience. The partisans of new music at times incline too much to blame conductors or "elitist" trustees for placing obstacles in the way of performing new music, when some of their attention should be directed at the quality and communicability of the composers whom they support.[285]

[284] Milton Babbitt, "Who Cares if You Listen?" *High Fidelity*, VII/2 (February 1958).

[285] Hart, *Orpheus in the New World: The Symphony Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution*, 422.

It was that notion of "communicability," still viewed with skepticism by many of the cognoscenti, that formed Corigliano's compositional approach, as he expounds:

> The radical stance has to do with a rather complex problem and that's the egocentric problem of the god-composer. I really think we have to acknowledge that there was a long period of time in which composers did not write for audiences—specifically said they weren't—and wrote for themselves only, and perhaps a few colleagues who understand what they do, and took pride in this….What happens if you think of yourself as a god-composer is that the general thought would be…if I'm speaking to the audiences and they're understanding me, I am not a god. I am more godlike if I write music that no one understands—just as one does not understand God—and the audience comes and does not understand it but worships it because it's by a superior being, meaning a god. When you do that, then you actually feel that a piece that no one understands is a more elevated work, morally strong work, than a work that audiences can begin to understand and delve into.
>
> That philosophy, over a 50-year span, curdled the relationship between the composer and audiences because before that audiences did want to hear new pieces….That results in an audience apprehension about a new work: that it's not meant for them; that if they don't understand it, they're foolish; and that what they don't understand, they should love and support, and what they do understand, they should realize is merely people-pleasing entertainment.[286]

Though never implying that he intended to pander to audiences, Corigliano took the risk of openly stating his intention to write a work that he sincerely hoped would manage to reach listeners, rather than exclude them. It is doubtful that he could ever have anticipated the extent to which he would accomplish this goal with his Clarinet Concerto. Even decades later, Drucker is still taken aback, remembering:

> When it finally got copied, the score was made, and the day of the first rehearsal arrived, we were there onstage and [Bernstein] came out and he spoke for *fifty* minutes, explaining the piece and what it was all about and

[286] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

> so forth. And we didn't play a note for almost an hour. We just worked very hard; it was complete immersion. We did five performances in a very *short* week-and-a-half, in addition to the rehearsals….It was *exciting*….There were five standing ovations in the five performances and the reviews were *incredible*. I mean, I couldn't *believe* the reviews….[287]
>
> The piece is like *The Rite of Spring* of Stravinsky with a solo instrument. It had that kind of a *shock* value, if you want to use that term….Somebody said at the time, in the music administration at the Philharmonic, that they thought when [Corigliano] delivered the work it would be a small piece. And it turned out to be monumental.[288]

The reviews Drucker mentions attest to the impact of the world premiere of Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto on December 6, 1977. Under the headline, "Concert: Drucker Shines," Harold C. Schonberg wrote in *The New York Times*: "Judging from the audience reaction, Mr. Corigliano did indeed communicate. He was recalled several times amid manifestations of real enthusiasm….A concerto is expected to be difficult for the soloist, and Mr. Corigliano has given Mr. Drucker…a thorough workout….Mr. Drucker's playing was all that one had expected….The ovation at the end was, of course, just as much for him as it was for the composer."[289] Thus, Schonberg introduces the leitmotivs forming the bedrock of the critical consensus: that of "communication," "difficulty," and "virtuosity." Robert Kimball picked up those themes in "Cheers for All at Fisher Hall" in *The New York Post*, citing the "cheers for clarinetist Stanley Drucker and an equally fervent ovation for conductor Leonard Bernstein, the New York Philharmonic and composer John Corigliano," the "audience's five-minute explosion,"

[287] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, November 20, 2004.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Harold C. Schonberg, "Concert: Drucker Shines," *The New York Times*, December 9, 1977.

"Drucker's fabulous skill and musicianship," and "Bernstein's charismatic and sympathetic direction."[290] He continued:

> The titles of the movements…hint at the diversity of moods, styles and techniques employed in the piece. The music opens with a series of rapid runs that make the famous glissando that begins Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue seem like child's play, which it isn't….The slow movement, much in the spirit of Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings," is a memorial to the composer's father….The blazing Antiphonal Toccata had…five horn players strategically placed at different locations in the first tier and two trumpets side by side in the second tier. Under Bernstein's catalytic direction the orchestra filled the hall with superphonic sound.[291]

Such a description helps account for the unusually visceral response that prompted Bob Micklin's consideration of "A Modern Master's Surprise" in *Newsday*:

> The general audience of the New York Philharmonic has a reputation for being about as free-thinking as the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Yet the prolonged standing ovation and the many shouts of "bravo" which resounded through Avery Fisher Hall…indicated that maybe—just maybe—the Philharmonic audience has been getting a bum rap. It is true that Corigliano's new clarinet concerto is very exciting. It's also true that soloist Stanley Drucker…played the music with overwhelming skill and feeling. Furthermore, Leonard Bernstein was on the podium….[Corigliano] has employed the resources of a full symphony orchestra with ingenuity, and has constructed many passages for the soloist that sound fiendishly difficult….Corigliano does have a distinctive musical mind, one that appears as interested in melody and form as in virtuosic brilliance and vivid instrumental colors….No matter where the musical accents lay, Drucker played dazzlingly and the orchestra and Bernstein gave him solid, empathetic support.[292]

[290] Robert Kimball, "Cheers for All at Fisher Hall," *The New York Post*, December 7, 1977.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Bob Micklin, "A Modern Master's Surprise," *Newsday*, December 7, 1977.

As Drucker, himself, concedes: "I think the piece itself requires a lot of physical strength to carry off. It's relentless in its difficulties and it requires sort of a heroic undertaking by whoever is going to play it….In a certain sense it's *hysteria*, but it's controlled hysteria."[293] Corigliano, in turn, credits Drucker's "essential" role in securing a future for his work:

> If that had not been a really exciting performance, it would be looked at as one of those pieces that *could* be wonderful, perhaps, but no one will ever know because it's so badly written, in a sense, for the clarinet that "if a Stanley Drucker can't play it, I don't really want to look at this." And, also, because he added so much as a soloist because he has such a real soloist mentality: I mean, he can play in the orchestra but he's also perfectly happy to stand right up in the front and be as exciting as a Horowitz or a Rubinstein or someone like that. He's a born performer. Sometimes great woodwind players in the orchestra are not so great about standing in front of an audience. They'd rather be seated in that chair, and they can play beautifully, but when they're standing they don't change into the soloist-performer and Stanley does. I think that if this didn't have a theatrical and vibrant first performance, it might not have seen the light of day for many, many years. But Stanley was *so* exuberant and had conquered the difficulties so much. The only problem I had with it is that, because it was so extraordinarily difficult, a lot of clarinetists didn't think that anybody *else* could play it but Stanley, and it took a couple of years of practicing for them to start to play the piece.[294]

Drucker and Corigliano are in agreement about the relatively rapid manner in which the premiere of the Clarinet Concerto helped elevate the composer's stature, with Drucker speculating, "I think, in a way, this work put Corigliano on the map….I think other works were commissioned because of this piece being so successful….It was a very amazing coming-together of Corigliano, Bernstein, and me."[295] Corigliano elaborates:

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[293] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, November 20, 2004.

[294] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

[295] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, November 20, 2004.

> I think it did have a big effect for a few reasons: It was the first piece the New York Philharmonic played of mine. It was in New York, which is the center hub, so a lot of people got to hear this. It was, I must say, an extraordinary success. And I'm not saying this self-aggrandizingly but, according to management there, they had never seen a new piece receive that kind of reception *ever*. So the word got around that there was this very, very exciting piece that the audiences loved, the critics loved, and that set the hall on fire in a sense, and made a big difference. I've had other premieres but the very, very important kind of thing is to go to an orchestra like the Philharmonic that had three or four performances that week….The birth of the Clarinet Concerto was in the best possible place for it.[296]

Appropriately enough, the commission granted by the New York Philharmonic to an extended member of the Philharmonic community, via the recommendation of a legendary musician forever connected with the community, set Corigliano's career on a path that would lead to future Philharmonic commissions, a Pulitzer Prize, and a host of other distinctions.

Programming: The Trio Becomes a Quartet

> In former times music-in-performance was essentially contemporary music….If, at times, the public was indifferent to these offerings…it is still true that the composer intended that the audience be pleased at the first—and often the only—hearing of his work. Like the popular music of today, it was composed for the moment…. The…preservation of old scores…permitted the injection of the now familiar discrepancy or "lag" between the audience taste of the day and the current style of composition that must compete with the past accumulations. Consequently, the volume of "latent" music on the library shelves is today much greater than can ever possibly be played. Not only the cumulated past repertoires…but also the currently composed works, constitute a reservoir from which only a very limited number can ever possibly see the light of production. This circumstance imposes upon the performers the necessity—or privilege—of choice from a wide latitude of musical forms and styles…and disrupts the erstwhile more or less simple and direct relation between the composer

[296] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

> and the consumer public that prevailed in the days of Bach, Haydn, and Mozart.[297]

As John H. Mueller suggests in his 1951 study *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste*, programming involves not only the sometimes brutal act of selecting one work over another, but also the interplay between a variety of individuals or entities. If Corigliano was seeking to breach the divide between audiences and composers through his Clarinet Concerto, he is also quick to point out his indebtedness toward the soloist to whom he was able to entrust his composition. In *The American Musical Landscape* from 1993, Richard Crawford summarizes the kind of role filled by a Stanley Drucker within the triumvirate of composer, audience, and performer:

> In the professional realm, the public concert is the emblematic event, for it is there that musical effort comes to fruition. A composer's invention, a teacher's regimen, an instrument-maker's labor…a critic's judgment—all…revolve around the moment when performers sing or play music for the public to hear. For it's up to the performer to seize the occasion and, through artistry, technique, intellect, and personality, connect with an audience….Because musical performance seeks connection, it is often judged less by what performers do than by how they are received….To think of audiences and their reception of performers is to recognize that music is a particular kind of human interaction as well as an art.[298]

In some instances, this trio can function independently, in a purely linear manner, with the composer handing off a new work to a performer to present to an audience. For the Philharmonic, as with most larger ensembles, one more abiding figure must enter the picture in order for any music to actually reach the public. Typically the most powerful member of this

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[297] John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1951), 9-10.

[298] Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 70-71.

interconnected quartet, it is the conductor that holds sway when it comes to the decision-making involved in programming, deeming particular compositions worthy of performance. In optimal situations, it is an orchestra's music director who bears the responsibility for shaping that ensemble's involvement with contemporary music.

Having occupied a particularly unique niche within the Philharmonic for over four decades, as Associate Principal Bass, composer, educator, and leader, Jon Deak is privileged to offer a rare glimpse into the relationship between music directors and the contemporary composer. He joined the orchestra in 1969, between the tenures of Bernstein and Pierre Boulez and felt a kinship with these fellow multi-hyphenates, professing to be "one of [Boulez's] biggest fans."[299] He continues:

> Being a composer, and I was sad to say, in all those years of playing in the section, I was almost always the only composer in the orchestra. In a sense, it was nice in a way, but it was kind of lonely, and I wanted to foment and encourage contemporary music to be played. And, of course, I was like a duck in the water with Boulez being conductor there because he did not only a lot of contemporary music, but he did it well. He really cared about it. As did Bernstein—in a *completely* different way…. [Boulez] was a radical in the days just at the end of World War II especially, and retained a certain radical perspective. But he was very catholic in his interests of promoting American new music….
>
> He gave a lot of opportunity to composers, including myself….The first piece he heard of mine was when I auditioned….He said, "Anything else you want to play as a solo?" and I said, "Yes, Maestro, I have this piece that I wrote." I remember…the orchestra personnel manager at the time looked at me in horror. He said, "You can't do that." I said, "Why not? It's a piece I wrote. I think it shows bass playing." [Boulez] said, "What is the title?" And it was *Surrealist Studies*. It was a study on Joan Miró's "Woman and Bird Before the Moon."…I guess it was, at that time, a little influenced by George Crumb, perhaps, but it had my own kind of weird otherworldly part to it. And Boulez, I think, liked it, and so later he

[299] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

> commissioned *Dire Expectations* and we did it on a "Prospective Encounter."[300]

Deak clearly remains grateful for the encouragement from Boulez that brought about his first commission from his own orchestra. The music director conducted the world premiere of Deak's chamber work, *Dire Expectations*, on one of his "Prospective Encounters" devoted to new music on May 14, 1976. In his review in *The New York Times*, Allen Hughes noted: "Mr. Deak, who is a double-bass player in the Philharmonic, had produced an amusing work….that exploited the imitative possibilities of music. It was…clever…and suggested that Mr. Deak is nothing if not thorough in his working-out of a composition."[301]

It was an auspicious beginning for Deak, establishing a pattern early on in his Philharmonic career of straddling the lines between various, and visible, roles within the orchestra. He confesses:

> It was thrilling, utterly thrilling, and I guess the word is addictive. Certainly, it gave me a whole new slant (of course I had been composing far before I joined the Philharmonic) on that level, to relate to a music director. And since then, actually, I was very fortunate. I think, since then, every music director has conducted at least one work of mine in some way or another. And it's interesting working with all of them—vastly different experiences….The success of *Dire Expectations* under Boulez led the management to gradually discuss the idea of commissioning me in general.[302]

Thus, Boulez was, in some sense, responsible for enabling Deak to collaborate with his successor, Zubin Mehta, as part of the same initiative that produced the Corigliano Clarinet

[300] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

[301] Allen Hughes, "Concert: Philharmonic," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1976.

[302] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

Concerto. Deak was commissioned to write a concerto for oboe d'amore for his colleague Thomas Stacy and, on October 9, 1980, Mehta conducted the world premiere of the seventh work in that series funded by Goelet, *The Fearsome Endeavor*. The headline in *The Daily News* read "Philharmonic Plays One By Its Own," as Bill Zakariasen reported:

> In last week's New York Philharmonic program…Zubin Mehta followed a bracing performance of the Haydn "Military" Symphony with the world premiere of the Concerto for Oboe d'Amore and Orchestra by Jon Deak. The event made history of a sort, since this was the first work commissioned from a member of the Philharmonic by that orchestra in its history. No doubt the facts that Deak plays double bass and Mehta is likewise a well-known virtuoso on that instrument played roles in this gesture. It was also interesting to note that Deak remained at his usual post for the performance.
>
> The Philharmonic's Thomas Stacy was soloist in this work, subtitled "The Fearsome Endeavor."…Literally every event and line of conversation is implicitly illustrated in the score—the instruments talk, and when they can't, Deak adds extra-musical devices such as police and kazoo whistles, thunder and the like….Deak decisively has proven his expertise in orchestration.[303]

It seems only natural that the indefatigable Deak wanted to be as personally involved as possible in the most prestigious premiere of his compositional career. He adds:

> Zubin Mehta was happy to do it….It was marvelous. He was very good and very professional in his outlook and was willing to work in terms of interpretation and some of my crazy mistakes. Because I'm not a purist and I'm not perfect. Some composers are a little bit more meticulous than I am in making sure all the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted, meaning all the sharps and flats are in the right place. He was very patient in that, and Tom played beautifully, so I was very happy.[304]

[303] Bill Zakariasen, "Philharmonic Plays One By Its Own," *Daily News*, October 13, 1980.

[304] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

From his distinctive standpoint, Deak further assesses: "Zubin was, I would say, a traditionalist. He liked to please the audience with his selection of programs. He did do a fair amount of contemporary music."[305] Such precepts evidently led Mehta to take the rare step of electing, in his second season as music director, to champion a work only recently premiered by the orchestra. On April 27, 1980, in "The 'Unfashionably Romantic' Music of John Corigliano," Allan Kozinn explained in *The New York Times*:

> When the New York Philharmonic gave John Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto its world premiere in Dec., 1977, something unusual happened: the thousands of subscribers who normally cringe at the sight of the word "premiere" on a concert program, and who either avoid new works or politely suffer through them, actually *liked* this piece. In fact, they gave it a standing ovation at all five performances. The same thing happened last year, when the Los Angeles Philharmonic introduced the work to the West Coast, and again just three weeks ago when Philharmonic clarinetist Stanley Drucker…performed it with the Toronto Symphony. Suddenly, this colorful, frankly eclectic and mostly tonal Concerto is a popular number among orchestra directors who see in it an opportunity to fulfill their obligation to contemporary music without alienating ticketholders….
>
> New Yorkers won't have to travel…far to hear it again….Mr. Drucker and the Philharmonic will perform the work at Avery Fisher Hall [on May 2], and when the Lehman College Center for the Performing Arts opens in September, the orchestra will trek up to the Bronx to play the Concerto there. In the interim, the Philharmonic will record the piece for New World Records and then tour Europe with it this summer. If there's one thing composers like even better than standing ovations, it's seeing their music slip immediately into the repertory.[306]

Though Corigliano's professed desire to "communicate" through his music may have still been considered unorthodox by some of his colleagues in 1977, it was the consistently enthusiastic

[305] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

[306] Allan Kozinn, "The 'Unfashionably Romantic' Music of John Corigliano," *The New York Times*, April 27, 1980.

crowd response at performance after performance that created such demand for further performances, even by his hometown orchestra. He remembers:

> I was thrilled….The performance in New York was the learning performance….I was even happier because I knew that then they were going to play it all over in Vienna and in all sorts of cities in Europe….They had called and told me that and I actually went on the tour….It was very, very exciting to see what happens in Brussels when the whole audience jumps to its feet, and in Vienna when they hear a piece that's very unlike the music they're used to, still reacting in the way they did.[307]

In presenting Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto to a wider public, and further cementing the success of the Philharmonic's commission, Mehta's unusual advocacy for a work originally conducted by Bernstein earned both critical and artistic dividends. Heralding "Mehta Puts His Stamp on the Philharmonic" in *The New York Times* on May 6, 1979, Schonberg declared: "Seldom is it that new works come back for a second hearing; the major focus of interest almost everywhere is the first performance, after which a composition is hastily dropped….But if audiences respond to a work, as they did with the Corigliano, it should be revived, and the Philharmonic is setting a healthy precedent in that respect."[308] Furthermore, the Philharmonic's recording of the work garnered a Grammy nomination for Drucker in 1982. By the time the original world premiere performance of Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto, conducted by Bernstein, was included in the Philharmonic's 1997 boxed set, *The Historic Broadcasts, 1923 to 1987*, the status of this work—shaped, in turn, by a composer seeking to communicate, a dynamic and virtuosic soloist, and the support of two music directors—was secure.

[307] John Corigliano, interview by author, October 27, 2006.

[308] Harold C. Schonberg, "Mehta Puts His Stamp on the Philharmonic," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1979.

William Bolcom: Enlarging the Philharmonic Community

> I didn't know William Bolcom, but I heard about him, and then I heard some of his pieces and there was a theatricality about them. They were fun works. They were very accessible audience-type pieces….This [Concerto] was specifically for the anniversary of the New York Philharmonic. It was going to be conducted by Leonard Slatkin, who was a frequent guest with us—an excellent musician….This piece, I felt, was fun to play. It was a kind of a piece that the audience could respond to very easily. It had a lot of popular elements in it, like the feeling of swing a little bit, and pop music, and there was sort of a loopy waltz in the third movement, with a lot of things that sounded drunk, and a lot of technical challenge in that movement. The slow movement was more like a song. It had some interesting effects because the slow movement opened with a tuba solo (which is very rare, I'd say, in music, to open with a tuba solo) but it was really very effective. So I felt that I really liked this piece from the beginning. It wasn't scary like Corigliano, the first time I looked at that hand-written score. But this was going to be fun to do.[309]

Having already received widespread acclaim for premiering Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto in 1977, Drucker was both humbled and enthusiastic upon being informed, about a decade later, that he was going to be the recipient of another Philharmonic commission, again funded by Goelet. As Kozinn reported in his 1998 *New York Times* obituary, commending the philanthropist's innumerable contributions to the arts, "To celebrate the Philharmonic's 150th anniversary in 1992, Mr. Goelet paid for another 36 works. The series, which cost $700,000, was the largest group of commissions ever undertaken by an American orchestra. The composers ran the stylistic gamut, from atonalists to neo-Romantics to Minimalists."[310] Such diversity was mirrored by Drucker's experiences premiering two distinctly different works written under decidedly different circumstances. While his first commission involved an

[309] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 8, 2013.

[310] Allan Kozinn, "Francis Goelet, Philanthropist and Music Lover, 72, is Dead," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1998.

extended member of the Philharmonic community, a composer long known to Drucker and his colleagues through familial connections, this new commission, instead, essentially brought an established name into the Philharmonic community for the first time.

Though Boulez had conducted one of William Bolcom's chamber works, *Morning and Evening Poems*, at a "Prospective Encounter" in 1973, when Drucker was notified about the details of the forthcoming commission, the Philharmonic had not yet performed any of Bolcom's orchestral oeuvre. Thus, what Drucker had "heard about" the composer originated from such accounts as Jack Hiemenz's 1976 "Musician of the Month" profile in *High Fidelity/Musical America*:

> William Bolcom, the quintessent crossover composer, is not unique simply because he makes the past his plaything….Nor is Bolcom unique because…he sometimes employs popular music styles in his own compositions….Or because…he will sometimes step out of the serious music vineyard altogether, to perform popular music from an earlier age. What makes…Bolcom unique is the totality, the incredible *extent*, of his crossover activity—that he can pull it all off while retaining his stripes as a practitioner of serious music.[311]

Based at the University of Michigan since 1973, Bolcom's diverse musical interests blurred lines not only between "classical" and "popular" but also between composer and performer. His involvement in the revitalization and propagation of ragtime and American songs frequently found him at the piano for recitals with his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris, while simultaneously juggling increasing demands for new works, ranging from solo pieces to symphonies. Upon achieving, at the age of 50, what is arguably the height of compositional recognition, winning the Pulitzer Prize for his *12 New Etudes for Piano* in 1988, *The New York*

[311] Jack Hiemenz, "Musician of the Month: William Bolcom," *High Fidelity/Musical America*, xxvi/9 (1976), 4.

Times duly noted his "backlog of commissions that extends through 1994."[312] One of those was Drucker's Concerto.

Unbeknownst to Drucker, the seeds of Bolcom's Clarinet Concerto were actually sown around the same time he was originally consulted about a Philharmonic commission back in the 1970s. When the orchestra's Co-Principal Trumpet, Gerard Schwarz, was similarly queried, the potentiality of bringing Bolcom into the Philharmonic community first arose. The composer laughingly reminisces:

> What a story. I'd known Gerard Schwarz for a number of years. He was the hotshot young man who came in as a teenager and became first player after a very short time. And, in fact, he and I had done a recording of…pieces by cornetist Herbert L. Clarke…. Of course, he would have liked to have had a proper concerto from me. Then what happened was that he resigned from the orchestra [in 1977] and became a ballet conductor working for various people….
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> So, years later, I get a call again from [New York Philharmonic Chairman] Carlos [Moseley] saying, "Would you like to do a clarinet concerto with Stanley Drucker?" and I thought, "My heavens, why not?"…He was somebody I had certainly thought a lot of and I had heard him play many times. He'd always been in the orchestra, although he'd always done plenty of other things.
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> Behind all of this was the fact that many, many, many years ago, the clarinetist and producer David Oppenheim had tried to arrange a clarinet concerto for Benny Goodman. And we met. Benny Goodman was not an easy person at all but I always loved his playing. I played something I was working on…and he said, "It modulates too much." So that was the end of that. But in the back of my mind, it had the sound of Benny because I'd always had a thing for that sound.
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> Now, of course, this is not Stanley Drucker's sound. It doesn't matter. The whole point is that the funny part about it is, if something is fit very well for a particular mentality, it's not that hard for another person to come in, because there's a focus and there's a profile. Unlike clothes that don't fit if you don't have the right size, it's possible that if it's really well made, the piece of musical clothing *will* fit another person from a very

[312] "Winners of Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism, Letters and the Arts," *The New York Times*, April 1, 1988.

> different point of view….So it has certain elements of Benny in the jazz kind of atmosphere underneath it all but it still is certainly something that could be done by all kinds of clarinetists….And I think, again, that what that proves is that if a piece has a focus, many different people can come to it from different angles.[313]

Unlike Corigliano, who specifically tailored his work for the soloist and orchestra he had grown up with, Bolcom, as a newcomer to the Philharmonic community, brought a wider variety of influences to his conception of his Clarinet Concerto. Expanding upon his previously professed familiarity with Drucker's talents, Bolcom clarifies:

> I certainly had respected his playing as an orchestral musician….He's a wonderful musician and I was delighted to work for him and work with him. I didn't do much consultation at all but I had had some experience with, first of all, hoping that I'd become a clarinetist myself and being dissuaded in junior high school from doing it because I was so terrible. The only thing I've ever been able to play reasonably competently is the piano. I've tried everything else. I can't sing. And so my principle as a composer has been to write for people, in part, things I wish I could have done if I'd played or sang myself. I love to write for singers because I'd love to be able to sing, but I have a horrible voice. And so maybe that's why I married a singer. But I would love to have played that Clarinet Concerto myself. I mean, I kept writing in a sense partly for Stanley, but also for a phantom "myself" playing the piece. There was something I would like to have been able to play, had I had the chops, but I simply never could….So it's a wishful-thinking Clarinet Concerto for myself plus Stanley.[314]

Perhaps there is some symmetry in the fact that both of Drucker's Philharmonic commissions emerged from concertos that were never actually written. When Bernstein was unable to acquiesce to Drucker's request for a work, he, instead, bestowed a gift upon a developing composer, deepening Corigliano's strong ties to the Philharmonic. By the time Drucker premiered the Corigliano Concerto in 1977, Schwarz had already left the orchestra to

[313] William Bolcom, interview by author, April 15, 2013.

[314] Ibid.

begin his conducting career, leaving behind only a specter of a non-existent trumpet concerto by Bolcom. When Bolcom finally did receive a formal offer of a commission from the orchestra, it was, instead, for a clarinet concerto. In that intervening decade, Bolcom had, nevertheless, maintained sufficient awareness of the Philharmonic that he was not only cognizant of Drucker's abilities but also moved to create an extended solo for the orchestra's principal tuba player to open the second movement in a strikingly memorable fashion. His relationship with the Philharmonic was further strengthened through his longstanding association with conductor Leonard Slatkin, a friendship dating back to the 1964 Aspen Music Festival. Slatkin, who was to conduct the premiere of the Clarinet Concerto, led the Philharmonic's first performance of a Bolcom composition, his Piano Concerto with soloist Emanuel Ax, in April 1990. Thus, Drucker's second Philharmonic commission enlarged the Philharmonic community, finally cementing a connection with a highly regarded composer. For Bolcom, there was far less at stake with his Clarinet Concerto than there had been for Corigliano; as he explains, by 1988, he was already professionally secure enough that:

> I have to say that the Pulitzer Prize didn't have an incredibly overwhelming effect on my career. I was doing fine and I've done reasonably well ever since. First of all, I think there's a rather low glass ceiling for art music composers in this world, because we just don't have the center of the attention of a mercantile society such as ours. That said, I think I've done rather well. I've had a lot of good luck. I've had wonderful performers and many of them are still my friends. I feel quite happy with my career in that kind of way but I can't say that the Prize had that much effect on my career.[315]

[315] William Bolcom, interview by author, April 15, 2013.

Embracing Accessibility and Fun

> The beginning of the Clarinet Concerto I thought might turn out to be a Fifth Symphony. And I began it, and I said, "No, this is a Clarinet Concerto." But the other part about it was, I decided I would make it not showy. I wasn't terribly interested in the funny squeaks and squawks people were using in those days for a lot of music. I thought I'd gotten bloody tired of it….When it came to the Clarinet Concerto, I really wanted to do something that had lyricism but was also very straightforward and very accessible.[316]

In his refreshingly candid summation of his intentions, Bolcom opts to use the very term, "accessible," that inevitably surfaces in any analysis of his compositional catalogue. As John Rockwell wrote in "Music, Every Which Way" in *The New York Times* in 1987:

> In the last decade, the temper of contemporary music has shifted from dour, dissonant, highly cerebral modernism to stylistically diverse new-romantic styles, and Bolcom's music epitomizes that new esthetic climate. Bolcom composes music that audiences can like and critics can respect….This is music that speaks to Americans through American idioms….Bolcom is the most convincing and successful practitioner of an omnivorous style that unites the classical and popular traditions into a communicative, accessible music stiffened by the backbone of originality.[317]

Drucker relies upon similar language for his assessment of the new Clarinet Concerto: "[Bolcom] had a good sense of humor and certainly this Concerto bore it out. It has elements of several styles….It's completely accessible, rousing. It has its difficulties but they're very playable."[318] Bolcom helpfully provides an in-depth guide to those styles and influences contained within the work, starting with the first movement, "Allegro":

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[316] William Bolcom, interview by author, April 15, 2013.

[317] John Rockwell, "Music, Every Which Way," *The New York Times*, August 16, 1987.

[318] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 7, 2009.

It's sort of a sonata allegro if you really want to look at it, but not exactly. If anything, it's a kind of a ritornello, so the basic tune comes back in different ways with intervening material. There is something that feels sort of like a clarinet concerto in the grand sense. I've always also liked to invoke the whole history of a form. I was thinking, of course, of Weber and Mozart….but, also, I was trying to do something that would be direct and simple. The cadenza in the middle is actually at a different point than it usually is in a classical concerto. It actually is part of the rather un-dramatic conflict between soloist and orchestra. That's the whole 19th-century notion of the hero against the multitude and winning in the end….I wasn't really particularly interested in having any fight between a member of the orchestra and his colleagues….

I was sort of interested in a kind of collegial interplay, and that's probably what is basic about the first movement….I can't say the development is particularly stressful. The ending part, about the last few pages, is where there's a section that is really the most kind of "Benny-ish." And the basic little tune comes back at the end up in the higher octave. But it is, as I say, not a terribly stressful form and it ends quietly, which I think is also probably because in America, unlike Europe, people don't clap after the first movement of a concerto. That was the old ideal, the idea of a big, bang-up ending for the first movement, and I said, "I don't care. I don't have to do that." So I gave a nice little kind of sweet ending….

The second movement, curiously enough, my wife and I were on a cruise through the Mediterranean. We had been invited to perform a few times and we got off in Venice, and we found a hotel right on the Grand Canal, and I got up and I started to write this second movement ["Cantabile"], which felt like looking at the Grand Canal to me. But it's also got a kind of a soul feeling, twelve to the bar, with, what they call in black music, extended style….I remember one of the reviewers at the beginning said it sounded like elevator music because there were parts that sounded really sweet. Well, I wanted to have that, but there's a little bit more vinegar in the sweetness. There's enough harmonic vinegar. I wanted to have something that really was soulful and pretty, naturally pretty. I have no shame about writing pretty, and especially if it seemed like the right thing to do….

The third movement ["Scherzo-Finale"] was two things. I was a little bit kind of interested in doing a kind of slightly larky invocation of Ravel's *La valse* here and there, but without the sense of angst. And the other thing in between it is a Brazilian *chorinho*, which is one of the Brazilian dances. I got very much interested in Brazilian music about that time….I had probably gone into this because it was kind of an extension from my interest in classic ragtime and, of course, I was one of the forefront people of the ragtime revival. And so it's a kind of interplay between the two

> kinds of music in the last movement. It's the waltz part of it and, in between, you have these other things, which are closer to the Brazilian *chorinho*.[319]

In offering such a folksy, invitational glimpse into his Clarinet Concerto, the extremely affable Bolcom admirably takes his critics on, full-force, straightforwardly and preemptively defending his prerogative to create exactly the kind of music he feels compelled to write. With such self-assurance, he was obviously thoroughly versed in the manner in which certain descriptions, like "pretty," can be fraught with dismissive connotations, and unwilling to be dissuaded by those who still subscribed to the notion that all modern music ought to be abstruse and foreboding.

For Drucker, his second commission presented him with a chance to become personally acquainted with a composer who had previously only been a "name." As he explains, "I got to meet with him and talk the piece over and play some passages and it worked. He's a very personable guy and one could really, really have a straight-out conversation and give-and-take. And I was really pleased with the piece. I thought it was great."[320] Drucker gave the world premiere of Bolcom's Clarinet Concerto on January 3, 1992, with Leonard Slatkin and the New York Philharmonic, and an additional two performances that week. He recalls: "I think it got a *big* reaction because the piece ends so brilliantly in a blaze of notes. It's a piece that really sounds hard, and it probably is. But it's tuneful, it's technical, and Slatkin did it beautifully: a great collaborator."[321]

In his *New York Times* review, Bernard Holland wrote about "The Many Sides of William Bolcom":

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[319] William Bolcom, interview by author, April 15, 2013.

[320] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 8, 2013.

[321] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 7, 2009.

> William Bolcom's Clarinet Concerto…seemed to divide a New York Philharmonic audience into a number of camps. First there were those taken aback by its accessibility. Others were evidently suspicious of it. Still others—those perhaps unburdened by a recent history of public estrangement from new music—seemed to welcome accessibility as their due. Mr. Bolcom's piece…was indeed easy to listen to….Nothing here gnawed at the listener's feelings of guilt and inadequacy. Startlingly, Mr. Bolcom's concerto was fun. It also spoke to the moment, not to the ages….Mr. Drucker was a spotless clarinetist and the Philharmonic played handsomely.[322]

Bolcom does embrace those labels of "accessibility" and "fun" but also redefines them, explaining:

> I had thought of this kind of concerto as public pieces. I wanted to have something that would be gratifying. I always have addressed the performer first because a piece is going to come off, or not work, because of the performance. And a good piece badly played will often do worse than a bad piece well played. So I think it's important to deal with that. I really wanted to have a piece that was something that would become, maybe, repertory….
>
> I don't think you write *down* to an audience when you try to write something that is accessible. First of all, I hate the word "accessible." I don't think it's what I wanted. But some pieces are more extroverted and public and other pieces are introverted and private….There's lots of attitudes toward doing a concerto but I decided, in my case, I thought I'd like to do something that would maybe be done by people in a way that might surprise them because modern music is not supposed to be, well, friendly.[323]

Bolcom displays a healthy awareness of the double-edged sword facing composers, who are somehow supposed to not deter audiences and, yet, at the very same time, risk approbation if they actually create a work that is meant to be enjoyed. His immediate disavowal of the term "accessible," which he himself had already used to describe his intentions for his concerto,

[322] Bernard Holland, "The Many Sides of William Bolcom," *The New York Times*, January 6, 1992.

[323] William Bolcom, interview by author, April 15, 2013.

shows the inherent complexity of trying to translate specific musical aspirations into words. Instead, he prefers to speak about the extroverted nature of the work, while still making clear his hopes of creating a concerto that performers might want to play and listeners might want to hear. At the same time, he is mindful of the fact that such desires could run contrary to preconceived notions about contemporary works, a train of thought reflected by Peter Goodman of *Newsday*, who was dismayed at the lack of heft displayed by Bolcom's concerto:

> Nominally, the most attractive ingredient of Friday's New York Philharmonic program was the world premiere of William Bolcom's Clarinet Concerto….Bolcom is, after all, one of the nation's most important composers, a Pulitzer Prize-winner and extraordinarily successful at blending all manner of American musical styles in effective, often powerful works. His soloist was…Stanley Drucker, a foremost virtuoso, and the conductor was Leonard Slatkin, one of the most important American conductors. In the event, however, the first hearing of the Bolcom was outweighed by a stirring interpretation of Vaughan Williams' Symphony No. 4….Beside the Vaughan Williams, everything else on the program was like a divertissement….overall the concerto feels like chamber music swollen to occupy a full orchestra.[324]

As a fitting rebuttal, making a case that the critic actually missed the entire point of the work, Drucker offers a shrewd comparison of the two concertos the New York Philharmonic commissioned for him and pleads for greater inclusiveness:

> The Corigliano was a very personal approach. One was in their own world playing that solo part. It was not the kind of ensemble piece that the Bolcom was. It had a different meaning. The Corigliano was bigger than life in a lot of places and Bolcom was, I would say, part of life….I *knew* it was going to be liked by an audience because it's so accessible….[325]
>
> Corigliano's Concerto…was a landmark piece. It was enormous, tonally and viscerally. It stood alone, where Bill Bolcom's Concerto is more

[324] Peter Goodman, "Blending Clarinet, Orchestra," *Newsday*, January 6, 1992.

[325] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 8, 2013.

> gentle, in a certain way, and really totally approachable….It is so tuneful and fun, and everything doesn't have to be thorny and irregular in a certain way. I feel that there's a fun element that's really there that would be nice to hear….Every piece doesn't have to be the *Missa Solemnis*. We're hoping that some music *can* be accessible and fun.[326]

Bolcom will forever retain his connection with the Philharmonic through the inclusion of the live premiere performance of his Clarinet Concerto in the 1999 boxed set, *New York Philharmonic: An American Celebration.* In his typically self-effacing style, pondering the place of this work, or any particular composition, within his career, as a whole, he concludes:

> There's no real way to know what is going to happen to your work. Most composers' music dies with *them* and there is just no way to know whether or not what I'm going to be doing, or have been doing, is going to have any kind of future or not. But since I won't be here, it's out of my hands….And since I have no idea what's going to happen to it, I'm just going to go ahead and do what I want to do as long as I'm alive and able to work.[327]

A National Statement

> Regardless of the motivations or stipulations for each commission, the intention to issue them for contemporary works is a statement of the acceptance, encouragement and support of modern music. That most of the commissions were given to American composers makes it a national statement, as well….[328]

> The selection of Americans reflects both a relatively new pride felt by America's oldest symphony orchestra for its native composers and the unwritten wishes of the patron who has been responsible for funding the…more recent commissioning groups.[329]

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[326] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 8, 2013.

[327] William Bolcom, interview by author, April 15, 2013.

[328] LeFrak, *Forty Years of Commissioning by the New York Philharmonic 1945-1985,* 4.

[329] Ibid., 83-84.

In her examination of *Forty Years of Commissioning by the New York Philharmonic 1945-1985*, LeFrak points out the underlying patriotism behind the selection of composers. Beginning with the Bolcom Concerto in January 1992, this preponderance of homegrown works continued with the series marking the institution's 150th anniversary. Of all these celebratory commissions, one of the most meaningful, and filled with the most orchestral pride, might very well be Deak's *New York, 1842: A City on Fire*, for this work, conducted by Music Director Kurt Masur on December 12, 1992, enabled the Philharmonic to honor another one of its own members. Deak remembers:

> That was really fun….It had been commissioned as part of the 150th anniversary and I felt very proud of the fact that this was actually performed on a Young People's Concert [commemorating] the night of the first Philharmonic performance 150 years before, namely December 7 of 1842. So here we were exactly 150 years later playing this piece of mine, and, of course, I did a text based on some event of New York at that time. I pulled together a sort of Paul Bunyan-type figure of New York: Mose the Fireman. Mose Humphrey was a sort of super-human guy who would save people from fires. I went to the New York Historical Society and, at that time, they still had the original newspapers of that time in their original state. I had to put on white gloves, and I looked through these newspapers like that, and the person was watching me all the time. I found a notice there that referred to one of the New York Philharmonic members who had been injured in a fire, and he had been a volunteer fireman. And I thought, "Aha! That's my connection."
>
> So in the piece I had this fire and the members of the Philharmonic stopped their concert and went out and pushed the fire truck over and then Mose Humphrey climbed up the building and saved the baby. Kurt Masur was very good to work with in that because it was not an easy score to conduct and he was very meticulous and very respectful of all the details of the score. I was narrating. I had soloists within the orchestra: Joe Alessi, the trombone, and Cindy Phelps, the viola. They portrayed characters in the drama. Joe was sort of the embodiment of Mose the Fireman on his trombone. I think we all had a good time.[330]

[330] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

One could not possibly devise a more appropriate way to feature a Philharmonic member so inextricably connected with not only performance and composition, but also education, and using music to reach and delight the most impressionable audience members. In his review in *The New York Times*, Edward Rothstein appreciated Deak's ingenuity, describing the piece as, "one of the Philharmonic bassist's eclectic music dramas, full of instrumental imitations of different voices. The playful work included a scripted joke with Mr. Masur about the state of culture in New York City and an exuberantly delivered narrative by Mr. Deak about the Philharmonic's early years…."[331]

Another commission in this series went to John Williams, perhaps one of the most iconic American composers, though one typically associated with film rather than purely orchestral concert music. At the time of the Philharmonic's initiative, he had provided scores for *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977), *Superman* (1978), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), and *E.T.* (1982), while also penning such Americana as the *Olympic Fanfare and Theme* for the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 and *The Olympic Spirit* in 1988 for NBC Sports. He had earned Academy and Grammy Awards and was known as a jovial conductor of concerts with the Boston Pops Orchestra, which he directed from 1980 to 1993. Considering his enormous fame, he may have seemed a highly unlikely figure to write a bassoon concerto, but New York Philharmonic Principal Bassoon Judith LeClair was aware that his vast compositional catalogue already included assays in the genre, dating back to a 1969 Flute Concerto. She recounts:

> All the principals, the winds and strings, were given a choice to pick a composer to write a piece for them for the 150th anniversary. I thought, "Who do I try?"…And then someone said, "Well, what about John Williams?" because he was writing concerti. He had written, already, a

[331] Edward Rothstein, "Leading the Young Down a Percussive Path," *The New York Times*, December 15, 1992.

> Cello Concerto; he had written a Trumpet Concerto, I think, and I knew that he was looking into composing more classical orchestral works. And my brother-in-law worked with him at Tanglewood. My brother-in-law is a cellist with the Boston Symphony, so he worked with him very closely. He was actually doing some conducting with him and so he sort of asked him. He said, "Would you be interested?" And then I wrote John a letter, and my jaw hit the ground when he wrote back a letter saying he would be interested in doing that, that he loved my playing and that he would like to do it. I still have that letter. So we talked about it and then he wrote back a few weeks later, and he had an idea for the bassoon being made out of wood and like a tree, and that he would write something. So that's how it all came about.[332]

LeClair was excited about the prospect of this new work and even more invigorated by the close consultation she was able to have with Williams as *The Five Sacred Trees* began to emerge from his initial concept, explaining:

> I went to Boston once to meet with him and then I also went to Los Angeles and we met and played it. My husband [Jonathan Feldman] played the orchestra accompaniment on the piano. And we worked on a lot; we had to cut a lot because the piece is like 25 minutes long. We cut like an extra five minutes out of it because it was just too taxing, endurance-wise, and he was very, very good about my comments about, "I can't play this. Can you do this?" Certain things are unplayable and he just changed them. He was just fantastic.[333]

Recalling her world premiere performance of *The Five Sacred Trees, Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra*, with Masur conducting the Philharmonic on April 12, 1995, LeClair emphasizes:

> The orchestra was fantastic: everybody, from the violin solo, Glenn [Dicterow], and the harp and the percussion….I think it's become part of the bassoon repertoire, but it's an extremely difficult piece and you need to have a really incredible orchestra to play it because the parts are very difficult….It gets around but it takes a long time to learn it.[334]

[332] Judith LeClair, interview by author, May 13, 2010.

[333] Ibid.

[334] Ibid.

Her diligence did not go unnoticed, as Kozinn perceived in his *New York Times* review:

> …Mr. Williams's piece…makes extraordinary demands on a bassoonist's stamina and imagination….[In] his five-movement paean to majestic trees of various kinds, Mr. Williams gives the instrument long, mellifluous lines that probe its full range and virtually its entire coloristic palette. Ms. LeClair played the work with the best kind of virtuosity, the sort that creates the illusion that the toughest demands were no trouble at all. She brought a beautiful, singing tone to Mr. Williams's more ruminative passages, and vitality to its more overtly showy ones.[335]

In seeking to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the oldest orchestra in the United States, the series of commissions funded by Goelet additionally provided personal gratification for a number of individual Philharmonic members. For LeClair, her collaboration with Williams remains paramount, as she appends the coda for her commission experience: "We did premiere it here but the most exciting thing was we went to record it with the London Symphony and that was probably one of the most exciting weekends of my life. It was a great, great thing to do, and we've remained close friends."[336]

"Two Paths" with Four Women

> A discussion of the selection of the commissioned composers would not be complete without mention of those who were omitted. There are no women on the roster, not Barbara Kolb, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Lucia Dlugoszewski, Joan Tower, Vivian Fine or Miriam Gideon. While the Society seems to be taking active steps in declaring that America no longer feels its musical inferiority complex with its active pursuit of commissioning Americans, it still seems rooted to a male tradition.[337]

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[335] Allan Kozinn, "Spotlight on French Horn Players," *The New York Times*, April 15, 1995.

[336] Judith LeClair, interview by author, May 13, 2010.

[337] LeFrak, *Forty Years of Commissioning by the New York Philharmonic 1945-1985*, 93.

LeFrak directed this pointed rebuke to the New York Philharmonic's reactionary selection process back in 1986 and presumably felt immense, if belated, satisfaction when Mehta led the world premiere of Zwilich's *Symbolon* for Orchestra on June 1, 1988, a commission funded by the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. This milestone was just another in a line of signal accomplishments on Zwilich's resume, as the 1983 Pulitzer Prize awarded to her Symphony No. 1 was the first time that honor had been bestowed upon a woman. She was granted another Philharmonic commission as part of the 150th anniversary series, resulting in the premiere of her Symphony No. 3, conducted by Jahja Ling on February 25, 1993. On January 6, 1994, almost exactly two years after he conducted the Bolcom Clarinet Concerto, Slatkin returned to the Philharmonic to oversee the New York premiere of a work by another composer from LeFrak's list: Joan Tower's *Concerto for Orchestra*, a joint commission with the Chicago and Saint Louis Symphony Orchestras.

Though evidence of attempts by a major American orchestra to demonstrate support for a sorely neglected figure, that of the female composer, these works can alternately be viewed as isolated incidences of tokenism, promoting two of the most high-profile American women composers hardly lacking for performance opportunities. As she took stock of the current climate in *The New York Times* on January 28, 1990, in "Women Composers Find Things Easier—Sort Of," Heidi Waleson reported:

> Composers, male and female, agree that women are getting more important performances and positions than they were 20 years ago, although that's not saying much. Certainly there are many women active in the field: the American Music Center…lists about 600 living American women composers (it also lists more than 4,000 living men)….The differences…are more societal than anything else, and in the already small number of contemporary pieces appearing on standard chamber music and orchestral series around the country, music by women is not heavily represented. When it is played, it tends to be by the same handful of

> composers. Ms. Zwilich…is an exception: she gets more performances than most living male composers (her 1988 orchestral work "Symbolon" alone has had 23 performances and was recorded by the New York Philharmonic)….
>
> Behind-the-screen auditions for orchestra positions did a lot to get women fair treatment for those jobs. The composer's route to a career is seldom gender-blind, however….For the woman composer, conditioning begins with a lack of role models—who ever heard of a famous woman composer?—and continues into the student years….Women are still underrepresented on composition faculties: of tenure-track jobs, in 1986-87, only 8.6 percent were held by women….[338]

Although the figures were still prohibitive, considering how long it had taken the New York Philharmonic to begin acknowledging the existence of female composers, the act of selecting two women for commissions did at least represent an incremental step in a new direction. In *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* published in 2001, Christine Ammer delineates the uphill battle to earn a place on a program:

> Neither the New York Philharmonic nor the Boston Symphony had performed a single work by a woman until the latter played [Margaret Ruthven] Lang's *Dramatic Overture* in 1893….The records…did not improve markedly after 1914….New York did Mana-Zucca's *Fugato-Humoresque on "Dixie"* in the 1916-17 season, Marion Bauer's *Sun Splendor* in the 1947-48 season…Julia Perry's *Study for Orchestra* in 1965….
>
> [Elinor Remick]Warren's *Crystal Lake*…in 1974 and two works by Ruth Crawford Seeger in 1971 and 1974….Only after 1975 did women begin to be represented more, although still with the fanfare accompanying a novelty….In the 1997-98 season, the Seattle Symphony, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and Pittsburgh Symphony were the only major orchestras among fifteen surveyed that performed works by women composers.[339]

[338] Heidi Waleson, "Women Composers Find Things Easier—Sort Of," *The New York Times*, January 28, 1990.

[339] Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music, Century Edition*, 116-117.

As demonstrated by Drucker's two clarinet concertos, commissions come about in unusual and unexpected ways. Therefore, while it may seem counterintuitive, it is not entirely surprising that in 1999, when the New York Philharmonic premiered a work written by a female composer, commissioned by a woman, for two prominent female members of the Philharmonic, musicalizing two Biblical women, there had been no original gender-specific agenda. Cynthia Phelps, who was appointed Principal Viola by Masur in 1992, explains how her particular commission evolved:

> The person who endows my chair wanted to commission a concerto for me, and we weren't coming up with any composers that he really felt excited about. He wanted something a little audience-friendly, a little bit more mainstream, and that doesn't go over so well with today's press. So I think that something a little more edgy was not up his alley and the commission got dropped. Kurt Masur's wife, Tomoko, who often came to concerts, would observe the dynamic that I have with [Associate Principal Viola] Rebecca [Young]. We get along famously and we have a good time onstage and we really enjoy making music together. She knew about this dropped commission and decided that she wanted to pick it up. Kurt Masur had just conducted some of Sofia Gubaidulina's music and she really, really liked it a lot. And so that's how it came about. She wanted to take up the commission and she wanted it to be for both of us. It's really interesting because it was based on two characters from the Bible, Mary and Martha, and we each play those roles very distinctly in the music, so it was really a project that took off and we've had a great time with it ever since. [340]

Phelps provides compelling evidence for just how often programming can be shaped by such prosaic details as critical commentary, prevailing trends, and the underlying financial realities of orchestral life. In this instance, a former violist, Tomoko Masur, took it upon herself to spearhead the creation of a rare double concerto, *Two Paths for Two Solo Violas and Symphony Orchestra*, by a 67-year-old-composer with a unique background that frequently expresses itself

[340] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

in the kind of religious allusions that form the basis of this work. In a *New York Times* preview of the concerto on April 25, 1999, "Apostle of Inner Struggle and Redemption," Paul Griffiths depicted Gubaidulina as: "A woman among composers; a freethinker among Soviet apparatchiks; a Christian among atheists; an Easterner, half Tatar, among Europeans; a modernist among reactionaries, and a reactionary among modernists: Sofia Gubaidulina has lived with many conflicts, both with the outside world and within herself."[341] Mehta introduced her to the New York Philharmonic audience in 1985, conducting the United States premiere of her Violin Concerto, *Offertorium*, with Gidon Kremer; in 1987 her String Quartet No. 3 won the Grawemeyer Award, and she continued to gain increasing attention after resettling in Germany in 1991.

The fact that Gubaidulina had literally been born worlds away from Corigliano, Deak, Bolcom, and Williams becomes manifest as Phelps discusses working with the composer:

> We had no interaction with her until it was finished and then she was here so that we could ask her questions. She didn't speak English, but there was always an interpreter. She was very, very clear about what she wanted. Some things that she wrote were so difficult and I tried to see if she would amend some of them, to which she was very firm, and said, "No, no, this is what I want." But she was lovely about it so it became clear that every color, every dot, every dash, every octave was exactly where she wanted it. And that was a challenge, but it was lovely to work with somebody who was so committed and firm about exactly what kind of colors they wanted at every moment.[342]

Phelps plainly appreciated the opportunity to receive Gubaidulina's direct, and directing, insight about the new work. This unusual concerto also provided a three-way collaboration between the

[341] Paul Griffiths, "Apostle of Inner Struggle and Redemption," *The New York Times*, April 25, 1999.

[342] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

two soloists and their music director. Having been stand partners with Young since joining the Philharmonic, Phelps emphasizes:

> She's one of my closest friends. We have, as you can imagine after 20 years, a very, very tight relationship, and so we often socialize with our children outside of the Philharmonic. So it was just another opportunity for us to put another notch in our friendship belt, to really have this experience of performing this piece all over….I would have to say that we've both had tremendous fun professionally and personally.[343]

She goes on to offer an appraisal of Masur's role in shaping the performances of the work:

> Conducting new music, for him, is a bit of a challenge, but he responds very much to texture, color, drama, and so he really brought out all of those elements once he felt more comfortable with the piece. It was new for all of us so we were trying to chart our way through these waters that were so brand new. But I think he was able to bring out a lot of the drama. There's a lot of percussion, colors, and we're often in very conflicting registers, and so he really needed to support that with how he managed the orchestra and wove them in and out of our solo lines.[344]

Reflecting upon the honor she was given to present the world premiere of Gubaidulina's *Two Paths* with Young, Masur, and the New York Philharmonic on April 29, 1999, Phelps declares: "It's always nice to feel that one is contributing to their primary instrument's life-force, and we have so *few* concerti that it's an important piece to add to the repertoire. So that element was extremely exciting."[345] Justin Davidson made that same point in his review in *Newsday*, "Two Paths, Indeed," referring to the work as:

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[343] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Ibid.

> …a gripping, glowing piece. It is a major addition to the repertoire for two solo violas with orchestra….The work was commissioned for the Philharmonic and its two magnificent chief violists, Cynthia Phelps and Rebecca Young….Joined by their sensual sound, the parts are divided into two New Testament types of love: the sorrowing, worldly love of Mary, and the ethereal, companionable love of Martha…. Gubaidulina at her best—and she is at it here—wallows in the sensual joy of orchestral sound, and the silky, intertwined violas are slick against discreet throbs of percussion and muscular outbursts from the orchestra….This is music one wants to touch, explore and eventually come to understand.[346]

In *The New York Times*, Holland credited the soloists with enabling the work to attain its full potential, averring: "It helps that both Ms. Phelps and Ms. Young have the high-powered techniques necessary to fill Avery Fisher Hall."[347] While some of the ensuing attraction for audiences, and conductors programming the work, must have arisen from the sheer virtuosic spectacle of two women being given free rein to channel all their talents into these two sisters, Phelps more modestly believes the appeal lies in:

> A couple of things. It's a very spiritual piece. As I said, there's drama, but it evokes a certain reaction that is full of emotion and that's always a powerful thing in music. The other thing that it does is really showcase the color of the viola. You really, really get a sense of the very highest highs and the lowest lows because that's the way she voices the two instruments together. So I think that it's a huge showcase for the instrument and very different compared to a brilliant violin concerto or a soulful cello concerto. It really conveys that middle voice of our instrument in a way that's very special and dynamic and important for audiences to really know that that's what a viola can do.[348]

[346] Justin Davidson, "Two Paths, Indeed," *Newsday*, April 30, 1999.

[347] Bernard Holland, "Asian Effects Blend With Western, Proving They Are Part of One World," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1999.

[348] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

As Phelps already implied, Masur championed this work after the initial four performances, showcasing Phelps and Young at the Kennedy Center in June 1999, featuring *Two Paths* on tour with the Philharmonic in June 2000, and conducting it for the annual free Memorial Day Concert in May 2001. Bound together by funds provided by his wife, the world premiere performance of Gubaidulina's *Two Paths* by Phelps, Young, and Masur, was preserved in the 2001 boxed set, *Kurt Masur at the Philharmonic*. Though by no means a piece intended to be merely pigeonholed as a work by a "female composer," this distinctive Philharmonic commission, which proved so rewarding for Phelps, did add another name to the slowly growing list once proposed by LeFrak, a name that, back in 1986, she would have never anticipated. Furthermore, by weaving the additional layer of gender into consideration on multiple levels, Gubaidulina's *Two Paths* is imbued with intriguing possibilities for conductors and soloists alike, for, as Griffiths had creatively mused in his original *New York Time* profile: "It will be interesting one day to hear the work performed by male soloists with a woman conducting."[349]

The New York Philharmonic Museum

> We don't live in a vacuum, and we not only have to please the critics, but we have to especially please our audiences. In the 21st century it's still very tough to sell a contemporary piece, even with big soloist names coming in. But I think it's very important for us to explore that area with contemporary composers but still also important to play the great works from the 1800s. It's something that our subscription and our audiences demand. You can see it in the ticket sales, that if we programmed too many contemporary pieces the season does suffer and, subsequently, so do finances. So it's always this delicate balance. Certainly we need to promote talent, and we are always looking for compositional talent, but we have to still put our Beethoven and Brahms on every season. Thank

[349] Griffiths, "Apostle of Inner Struggle and Redemption."

> *goodness*. I mean, they're pieces that will never, never die out; they just get better with time.[350]

New York Philharmonic Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow's rumination on programming reemphasizes the inherent complications for all orchestras seeking to find the ever-elusive right "delicate balance." When forced to take into account the critics, the audience, the wide array of composers both native and foreign, and the always looming bottom line, the act of selecting one contemporary work for one specific program should, in the best, most conscientious cases, involve shrewd decisions about relative merit and cohesion. To demonstrate even greater commitment and actually commission a new work from an individual composer requires an even greater leap of faith and a more discerning examination of orchestral priorities. Due to the incredible beneficence and far-reaching vision of Goelet, one of the New York Philharmonic's priorities has been to honor its own members with commissions, reaping a number of bounties. For Drucker, Deak, LeClair, and Phelps, the opportunity to be involved in a world premiere performance supported by colleagues fostered both orchestral pride and artistic rejuvenation. Additionally, by allowing Philharmonic musicians to step into the spotlight and demonstrate the full range of their abilities, the concertos by Corigliano, Bolcom, Williams, and Gubaidulina reached out to the audience members who are, as Dicterow admitted, not always amenable to contemporary music. Those four incredibly dissimilar works, arising under sundry circumstances, and shaped by distinctly different composers, do share the sheer appeal of inviting concertgoers to appreciate displays of virtuosity at the highest level. As nearly every single review made clear, Drucker, LeClair, and Phelps gave an audience a reason to be willing to listen to a new composition with an open mind. There is always the hope that if one can

[350] Glenn Dicterow, interview by author, March 3, 2010.

identify with and marvel at Drucker's tour-de-force performance of concertos by Corigliano and Bolcom, one may become curious about other pieces by those composers, or, at the very least, less likely to automatically discount a new work.

As Dicterow emphasizes, the key word in orchestral programming is "balance," the need for both Beethoven and Bolcom in the orchestral world. Drucker similarly spoke of the coexistence of the "old masters," "Impressionists," and "avant-garde" within museums,[351] choosing to use that term in the very best sense, just as Lawrence Kramer does in his 2007 defense of *Why Classical Music Still Matters*:

> Classical music should only be so lucky as to have a museum culture…. [The] museum has become an animated space by affording opportunities to combine sociability, informality, and the enjoyment of art….[The] museum has become desirable space precisely because it is shaped for unhurried reflection in a world where unhurried reflection is the rarest of commodities….Classical music, I would like to say, is the same kind of thing: a living museum, living precisely because it is a kind of museum, and, like a museum, a place that exhibits new works as well as old.[352]

The ideal New York Philharmonic Museum that Drucker referred to at the beginning of this chapter ought to be a welcoming destination for performers, composers, conductors, and audience members alike, an institution with room for the great diversity displayed by the commissions created by Corigliano, Deak, Bolcom, Williams, and Gubaidulina, right alongside Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Copland, and composers yet to come. Over six decades at the Philharmonic, Drucker relished every single one of his 191 appearances as soloist with his orchestra, performing works ranging from Rossini to Nielsen. Yet, in this metaphorical museum, his most permanent legacy would surely be the two clarinet concertos added to the newer wing

[351] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 23, 2011.

[352] Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters*, 12-13.

of the edifice during his tenure. With his name forever figuratively inscribed on the adjoining plaques, he will always maintain his connection with the works he helped launch, just as Corigliano and Bolcom will likewise remain extended members of the Philharmonic community, their appellations engraved on those same allegorical markers.

Chapter 4: Music Directors and the Community

> The history of the Philharmonic is always one of new music directors coming along just about every decade, more or less….It pointed up the humanity of a situation, where the orchestra has the history, a long history, and the caretaker, the conductor, the music director, is the one that is there for a limited time. The orchestra's always there….It's probably healthy in a way that something *fresh* and new comes, not that the next music director is going to be better. Sometimes they aren't. Sometimes they are. From a professional standpoint, we get the best, usually, that there is to get, but a question of taste, a question of vision, repertoire, and what one's expectations are can be either met or not met. It's history. It's living history with an organization like the New York Philharmonic that's that old.[353]

In his sixty years at the New York Philharmonic, Stanley Drucker both witnessed a relatively regular passing of the baton and experienced the leadership of nine world-renowned conductors, in varying capacities. He joined the orchestra at a juncture point following the unexpectedly abrupt resignation of the previous music director, Artur Rodzinski, in February 1947. Bruno Walter, obliging as musical advisor for two seasons, hired Drucker in 1948, and the Philharmonic did not actually have a sole music director again until Dimitri Mitropoulos was appointed as such in 1950.

As Drucker intuits, the music director occupies a most paradoxical position. This individual can never be "of" the Philharmonic community, because, by definition, he (or, someday, she) must maintain the distance necessary to "direct" this very community. Yet, for a particular moment in time, the music director becomes the public embodiment, and essentially the emissary, of the whole orchestra. One can, for example, simply refer to "the Bernstein years" or the "Mehta era" in order to reference an entire timespan of life at the New York Philharmonic. Though critics have copiously chronicled the comings and goings, and the achievements and missteps, of the maestros who have filled the Philharmonic podium, they have done so from afar,

[353] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

and, typically, with an agenda regarding what role the institution ought to be filling within the cultural firmament. This chapter will, instead, provide a unique examination of how these music directors have related to the Philharmonic community. By enabling the members of this orchestra to share their opinions and experiences with these conductors, an intimate and insightful picture emerges of how the role of music director has changed over the past six decades. While it is understandable if players have sometimes chosen to concentrate on more positive attributes, I very much appreciate the candor of the members of the Philharmonic who entrusted me to shape a cohesive view of the authority figures who had, after all, functioned as the "boss."

As the New York Philharmonic's first American music director, and, admittedly, a celebrity whose fame far outranked any titular position, Leonard Bernstein broke the mold forever with his 1958 appointment. This chapter will therefore particularly focus on how his successors have envisioned the position and settled on different priorities. It will also consider how much interaction the individual music directors have had with the members of the Philharmonic and in what guises, as well as the relatively recent phenomenon of the increasing involvement of the community itself in selecting these leaders, thereby granting greater authority to what, as Drucker notes, is the enduring body that remains long after that baton is passed again.

Oral history captures moments, and some of the conductors in this chapter are figures from a different era, and spoken about accordingly. Mitropoulos and Walter died in 1960 and 1962; George Szell and Leopold Stokowski died in 1970 and 1977. Even Bernstein's more recent death, in 1990, will be subject to further commemorations as the 25th anniversary approaches in 2015. With that in mind, I must call attention to the fact that it was only as this dissertation was being revised for dissemination that the sad news of Lorin Maazel's death was

announced on July 13, 2014. Readers should be aware that all excerpts regarding his tenure at the Philharmonic were taken from interviews conducted when Maazel was still an active presence within the worldwide music community. Not only was the Philharmonic community likely shaken by his passing, but members might naturally have some modified views of this former music director if asked the exact same questions today.

From Walter to Mitropoulos: The Early Years

> The roster of brilliant conductors who have led the Philharmonic through a hundred years, speaks for itself. Carl Bergmann, Theodore Thomas, Leopold Damrosch, Walter Damrosch, Anton Seidl, Gustav Mahler—these are unforgettable names in the history of American music. Yet it is generally agreed that the Philharmonic-Symphony in recent years has enjoyed what is close to perfection in the conductor's art….If the founders of the Philharmonic dreamed of a far-distant age when great composers would at last be interpreted with profound insight…then their wish came true when their orchestra played under [Arturo] Toscanini….To others we are grateful for special revelations; to Bruno Walter, for example, who uncovers fresh wonders in Mozart. But Toscanini's fellow artists will join in this word of tribute to the unique beauty of the performances in which he and the musicians of the Philharmonic-Symphony collaborated….It is fortunate…that John Barbirolli follows Toscanini's ideal of reverence and integrity. Mr. Barbirolli must know that New York music lovers were prepared to pity the conductor who came next after Toscanini. The promptness with which he won…the affection and respect of orchestra and audience, is all the more a triumph.[354]

John Erskine's tribute to the past and current music directors, published in *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years* in 1943, underscores just how all-encompassing the image of an individual conductor can be, as the "glory days" of Toscanini's tenure (1928-36) still loomed powerfully when Drucker was appointed by Musical Advisor Bruno Walter in 1948. Born in Germany in 1876, Walter had benefitted from Mahler's

[354]Erksine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years*, 45-47.

tutelage before settling in the United States in 1939, becoming a citizen in 1946, and stepping in to guide his mentor's former orchestra in 1947. Considering that Drucker was only 19 years old when he first encountered Walter, it is logical that he would profess: "One felt in awe of somebody like that, who was Mahler's protégé, and who had been so famous and regarded so highly."[355] Thinking back to his first season with the Philharmonic, he reflects:

> The times that Walter came, they were programs of pure classicism. He did the German works: Mahler and Brahms and Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert. He was a persistent worker. He rehearsed to make sure he could achieve what he wanted. He would say, "Gentlemen, I am not happy," at times. And you worked hard but you were inspired. Even his physical appearance was one that sort of created an awe and an aura around him….He spoke English very well, actually, with a German accent. But he was a person that was definitely in command. He knew what he wanted and how to get it. He could draw wonderful performances in *that* repertoire that were amazing. Of course, I don't think he conducted too many pieces newer than Richard Strauss, which was new enough….[356]
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> I approached him at one point, where I asked him if he would autograph his autobiography, *Theme and Variations*, and he did. I was very happy that he did that. I felt that I didn't have very much social interaction with him because one didn't in those days. He was a venerable, important person, and we were just his foot soldiers.[357]

Drucker's reminiscence yields the image of an old-school conductor who occupied a position completely above the Philharmonic community in two different ways. As an "advisor," he was only a temporary presence, fulfilling a caretaker role out of a sense of duty. He was also an esteemed European figure with direct connections to an entirely different milieu and century. Though setting himself apart from the members of the Philharmonic, his leadership style was

[355] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 30, 2009.

[356] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[357] Ibid.

actually quite evolved for the era. As Erik Ryding and Rebecca Pechefsky explain in *Bruno Walter: A World Elsewhere*, from 2001:

> In his relations with orchestral musicians, Walter was perhaps the first world-renowned conductor to achieve a reputation for treating his players with courtesy rather than roughness….His disapproval was often expressed with the genial formula: "My friends, I am not quite happy. Please, once again." But this is not to say that he was a pushover; in fact, for all his courtliness, he could be quite firm with his players, until they gave him what he felt they were capable of giving.[358]

Drucker's second season at the Philharmonic was still mired in transition, with Leopold Stokowski and Dimitri Mitropoulos as principal conductors. Stokowski, who was born in London in 1882, was most closely associated with the Philadelphia Orchestra, which he led from 1912 to 1936. Drucker remembers:

> He was the man in the ivory tower. He was unreal in his looks….He had an accent that one couldn't really pinpoint as to where it came from. But it was the kind of an aura he had of one of these people that one doesn't approach easily. He had great style because he was interested in sonics. Sound was very important to him and he would draw a lot of warm sounds out of orchestras. One of the techniques he used was "free bowing." In other words, when you see an orchestra, they all bow in the same direction, either up or down. In many pieces he wanted…free bowing, instead, and he felt it gave more sound, or a different kind of sound. Now, he also was an innovator. He tackled, in his day, some of the newest works around, things like *Gurrelieder* and movies. Of course, he shook hands with Mickey Mouse in *Fantasia*. That was a first. He always was innovating. I thought he was an interesting man but one that one never really got to know.[359]

Drucker depicts another European eminence presiding from above the Philharmonic community. Again, though, his "aura" was at least a cordial one, in keeping with Stokowski's own

[358] Erik Ryding and Rebecca Pechefsky, *Bruno Walter: A World Elsewhere* (Yale University Press, 2001), xiii-xiv.

[359] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 30, 2009.

conductorial precepts as set forth in *The American Symphony Orchestra* in 1967: "We have on one side of us the composers….On the other side, we have the listeners, the audience. Our duty and our privilege is to try to convey from the composer the message that is in his music….The only way I think that this can be attained is by perfect cooperation between all the players in the orchestra and the conductor. We call it ensemble. But it is a form of cooperation, the only way music should be made."[360] In his first two seasons at the New York Philharmonic, Drucker performed under a wide variety of guest conductors, in addition to Walter and Stokowski, but he had yet to experience the sustained vision and continuity that a proper music director was meant to provide. That would finally change when, following that one joint season, Stokowski departed and Mitropoulos was granted sole proprietorship of the post in 1950.

Dimitri Mitropoulos: Setting the Stage for Bernstein

> Throughout the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century, no distinction was generally made between a conductor and a composer. With few exceptions, he was one and the same….Nor did this pattern change significantly until the last third of the nineteenth century. The greatest conductors were almost without exception great composers….Among the most significant developments in the story of conducting was the rise of the specialist conductor—men like [Hans von] Bülow, whose professional life was devoted exclusively to championing the music of others (like many great conductors of the modern age, he was a competent but negligible composer). Others of his era included…Theodore Thomas, succeeded…by such major figures as Toscanini…Walter, Mengelberg…Stokowski, Koussevitsky….Some, however, were more specialist than others.[361]

[360] Leopold Stokowski, "Innovations: Acoustics and Seating" in *The American Symphony Orchestra,* ed. Henry Swoboda (Basic Books, Inc., 1967), 119.

[361] Jeremy Siepmann, "The History of Direction and Conducting" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra,* ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 114, 120-21.

Such a description, as offered in 2003 by Jeremy Siepmann in "The History of Direction and Conducting" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra,* aptly applied to Mitropoulos. Born in Greece in 1896, he led the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra for 12 years beginning in 1936, and became an American citizen in 1946. He was an accomplished pianist, a periodic composer, and, as a conductor who was "more specialist than others," he infused his tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic with his own priorities. In a 1950 *New Yorker* profile, "Maestro on a Mountaintop," Richard O. Boyer explained:

> Mitropoulos often feels that it may be necessary for him to suffer intensely for the cause of modern music….Mitropoulos's enthusiasm for atonal music means…not that he thinks any the less of Bach and Beethoven but that he also admires the controversial contemporary compositions and feels that they are pathetically in need of staunch defenders like him….Yet he tries to be moderate in his crusade, and… always makes a point of sandwiching a piece by Schoenberg…Berg…or some other comparable modern between substantial chunks of "lollipop," as he sadly calls the overplayed classical favorites….Mitropoulos thinks that out of an audience of five thousand, only a thousand will like an atonal piece, but this causes him no distress.[362]

As Drucker summons memories of his first music director, it becomes apparent that Mitropoulos approached his role with both firm musical objectives and novel conceptions regarding leadership:

> Mitropoulos was a person that strove for effects that were bigger than life….He didn't use a baton for most of his career….but he could create with his hands what he wanted ….You'd be drained when you played a performance with him because it took so much out of everybody….I had a lot of interaction with him because he was one of the people that helped form a chamber ensemble during his years. And he helped the group with commissioning works, which he was very interested in doing, and once in a while conducting one of the large chamber works that came along. He

[362] Richard O. Boyer, "Profiles: Maestro on a Mountaintop," *The New Yorker,* April 15, 1950, 39.

> was one that worked *with* the musicians and I think doing what he did improved the orchestra….[363]

> His programming was very adventurous. He tried to give a stage to people that never had a stage before. He was, I would say, an innovator and it was a very important decade. Certainly the orchestra learned to play complicated music….Some of the audience was a little bit leery of the repertoire that he did at times. He did an awful lot of classics and he did Mahler and so forth but he did do off-beat pieces, pieces that never would get the light of day in a lesser place than New York. But he was their champion. The point is he understood those scores. He could actually live those pieces because he had this kind of ability, talent, technique to do those pieces….And the fact that his repertoire was so enormous was certainly a revelation to somebody like a young person that came out of a regional orchestra situation where the repertoire was conservative and, in a certain sense, not as challenging.[364]

Drucker portrays Mitropoulos as a music director who, though foreign-born, became extensively involved with the Philharmonic community, embedding himself within the fabric of the quilt, instead of maintaining any kind of forbidding aura. Rather than a remote, imperious maestro, Drucker positions him as an educator, in several respects. By lending his support to their chamber music initiatives, he helped to inculcate a sense of independence and interdependence among the players. He sought to widen their musical horizons and sharpen different skills by introducing them to works far removed from the standards they were so accustomed to. Though, as Drucker implies, he may often not have succeeded, he similarly and persistently tried to share his dedication to new music with the greater public.

Drucker also speaks of Mitropoulos on a more personal level, professing:

> He was somebody that was the most approachable. I heard from others that he had helped people financially….He was a man that had a fervor about him. He was saintly, if such a thing exists. He did a lot of good

[363] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[364] Ibid.

> deeds….He was a warm, accessible person, an intelligent man, one that exuded a genuine friendliness.[365]

Indeed, Mitropoulos displayed evident concern for the members of the Philharmonic, as William R. Trotter relates in his 1995 book, *Priest of Music: The Life of Dimitri Mitropoulos*:

> Mitropoulos was keenly empathetic to the players' circumstances and did whatever he could to make things better, happier, more full of the spirit of cooperation that was his fixed ideal of the conductor-orchestra relationship….He was the first conductor in the orchestra's history to make a policy of rotating the first- and second-chair players on programs that were especially demanding. The first-chair player would perform on the first half, then be able to go home at intermission, while the assistant would take over for the second half of the concert. In this way, the assistant got a chance to perform more solo parts, and the section leaders got a break….[366]
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> Mitropoulos's conducting had been grounded on an article of faith…that the conductor was not a dictator but a partner in a cooperative creative enterprise, a colleague who should lead through example, persuasion, and love rather than fear. He and the orchestra became, in effect, brother-celebrants at a kind of artistic mass.[367]

Unfortunately, the facets of Mitropoulos's personality and belief system that led him to develop a new kind of relationship with the Philharmonic community also led to his downfall. Even Drucker admits, "People tried to take advantage of him in certain situations and the fact that he was not one of these tyrant conductors. They immediately would, perhaps, try to take advantage of the fact that he had this kind of nature that was warm and loving."[368] Furthermore, he was subject to a barrage of negative press, as Trotter relates:

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[365] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[366] William R. Trotter, *Priest of Music: The Life of Dimitri Mitropoulos* (Amadeus Press, 1995), 381-382.

[367] Ibid, 389.

[368] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

> Gradually, in the autumn of 1952, the prevailing critical attitude began to undergo a subtle change….There was no novelty to Mitropoulos any more; the things he had done superbly, the basic repertoire works he had conducted well—no longer were these things *enough*. The cycle of New York's cultural weather had entered a new phase. Fault would be increasingly found where it had not been found before…. Perhaps these changes were inevitable, an inherent quality in the nature of New York and its cultural significance.[369]

Drucker, too, cites the city's own peculiar nature as setting in motion a particular pattern, surmising:

> Criticism in New York is a little different than in many places. Usually, one has to, in New York, read a review and not know whether he liked it or disliked it. But, seriously, I felt that most of the conductors that I've seen over the years, at the start of their tenure, get wonderful reviews. As time goes on, the reviews make a big diminuendo and, very often, it gets pretty tough for them. Particularly, probably in New York, because New York has got the spotlight on it all the time. It's a first city. It wants new and fresh and exciting….[370]
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> With the critics and Mitropoulos, of course, that was pretty strong language….but at the beginning, Mitropoulos got *incredible* reviews….The man was a genius. Everything was in his head, no score needed. He certainly fulfilled a certain dream of what it could have been but, to sustain it all those years, that's another story. That's difficult to maintain….I felt that there were a lot of pressures on him, perhaps, to play more standard works, not so much testing the audience with works that were thorny or hard….The great thing is that he was the right person at the right time.[371]

Perhaps what was most right about the Mitropoulos years is that he began to change public perceptions of what constituted a proper music director for an institution like the New York Philharmonic. Through his advocacy, his proselytizing, and his breaking down of barriers

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[369] Trotter, *Priest of Music: The Life of Dimitri Mitropoulos*, 330-331.

[370] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, January 10, 2011.

[371] Ibid.

between the conductor and the players, he set the stage for the emergence of the music director who would be inextricably connected with the orchestra for the rest of his life: Bernstein. The ultimate nadir of Mitropoulos's directorship was a *New York Times* article published in April 1956, "The Philharmonic—What's Wrong With It And Why," in which Howard Taubman notoriously decreed: "He is not the first conductor to be overmatched by the requirements of the Philharmonic post."[372] Six months later, it was announced that, for the 1957-58 season, Mitropoulos would serve as principal conductor with Bernstein. In effect, Mitropoulos was being demoted, and, just as the partnership with Stokowski paved the way to his own ascendancy in 1950, this gambit logically resulted in Bernstein becoming the New York Philharmonic's music director in 1958.

Leonard Bernstein: The One and Only

> The new music director would need to meet certain criteria….The ideal candidate would be a proven master of the one hundred plus master instrumentalists; have American music in his veins and yet be in touch with the standard European classical and romantic repertoire; and have the star glamour that would prompt people in the rising middle classes in the New York City area (where a large percentage were Jewish) to purchase concert tickets….In 1926, when Toscanini had taken over the New York Philharmonic, New York had already achieved status as a global financial capital, but Americans were nagged by a sense that Europe…maintained cultural preeminence. Toscanini was going to help Americans catch up to the Europeans. By the end of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War, New York's cultural institutions were claiming hegemony, especially in painting….In short, whereas Toscanini had decades before legitimated New York's coming of age, Bernstein would now personify New York's ascension to [the] capital of Western culture.[373]

[372] Howard Taubman, "The Philharmonic—What's Wrong With It And Why," *The New York Times*, April 29, 1956.

[373] Barry Seldes, *Leonard Bernstein: The Political Life of an American Musician* (University of California Press, 2009), 73-74, 77.

Barry Seldes's assessment of the significance of Bernstein's appointment in his 2009 study, *Leonard Bernstein: The Political Life of an American Musician*, emphasizes the inherent message that was sent when the New York Philharmonic no longer needed to cross an ocean to anoint an accomplished conductor. There was also an underlying sense of synchronicity, in that Bernstein, a 40-year-old Massachusetts native, was returning to lead the orchestra that had first introduced him to the public at large, when he made his acclaimed debut as a substitute for the ailing Walter on November 14, 1943. Over six decades later, in *Leonard Bernstein: American Original*, published in 2008, his younger brother, Burton Bernstein reflected:

> Lenny was instantly in demand, as a guest conductor, a pianist, a composer, and as a personality. People who knew him (and many who didn't) said they always felt he had it in him to be a brilliant conductor of major orchestras one day. Really? Well, up to that point, conductors of major and minor American orchestras were imported, esteemed Europeans—Toscanini, Koussevitzky, Walter, Ormandy, Mitropoulos, Reiner, Rodzinski—but a born-and-bred American Jewish kid? Out of the question! And yet, amazingly, the subtly predictive suggestion in Bruno Zirato's pre-concert speech on the stage of Carnegie Hall that November Sunday in 1943 came true fifteen years later: Lenny…was appointed the Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. The precedent was set. An American kid of any background could announce to his parents that he would like to grow up one day to be a famous maestro like Lenny Bernstein….It could be done. It was possible….It is not too great a stretch to compare Lenny's appointment to Jackie Robinson's with the Brooklyn Dodgers eleven years earlier. To my mind, they both represented watershed moments in United States history—singular cultural, sociological events that opened the gates for any talented candidate.[374]

Just as Burton Bernstein grasped the symbolic nature of his brother's ascent to such a prestigious podium, Drucker, who was, by 1958, already a ten-year veteran of the New York

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[374] Burton Bernstein and Barbara Haws, *Leonard Bernstein: American Original, How a Modern Renaissance Man Transformed Music and the World During his New York Philharmonic Years, 1943-1976* (HarperCollins, 2008), 4-5.

Philharmonic, actually had a great deal in common with his new music director. They were both first-generation Americans, children of Jewish immigrants, trained at The Curtis Institute of Music. Indeed, it seems serendipitous that Drucker, who had given the Philadelphia premiere of Bernstein's Clarinet Sonata in 1945 as a sixteen-year-old Curtis student, was then appointed Principal Clarinet of the New York Philharmonic by Bernstein in 1960. It is also hardly surprising, considering how widely the Bernstein years at the Philharmonic have been chronicled, that Drucker emphasizes the special nature of that time for the Philharmonic community:

> It was a decade of amazing progress in so many different ways. Women came into the Philharmonic. The seasons were lengthened finally to year-round. The tours were incredibly glamorous. The recordings never stopped….The orchestra worked very hard during that decade but it was an amazing way of knowing the public, with the Young People's Concerts and with the special event concerts….The way he could express himself to any audience was very unique. He brought glamour to that post that was unparalleled, certainly, at that time. It removed the stereotype image, implanted in many, of the old maestro in the ivory tower and somebody that is in a lofty place, that one doesn't approach….He was at the right moment in history and the moment was great.[375]

Drucker is certainly not alone in his lingering affection for Bernstein's tenure as music director nor in his perception that Bernstein was a music director like none other: He was a youthful American who was not only approachable but brought an unprecedented patina of fame to his position. He had ties to former music directors, but built upon those characteristics in new ways. Like Mahler, he was a composer-conductor, but with the recent success of his Broadway musical *West Side Story* in 1957, he managed not only to blur the lines between high and low culture but also to augment his celebrity status. Like Mitropoulos, he was a pianist and a

[375] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

proponent of contemporary music, but he was able to draw upon his vast reserves of charisma and the new medium of television to elevate the educational outreach aspects of his role in a manner no one else could likely have ever envisioned. Furthermore, he not only came down from the "ivory tower" to mingle among the members of the Philharmonic, as Mitropoulos had, but for all intents and purposes, Bernstein simply became the worldwide representative of the orchestra: from 1958 to 1969, Bernstein "was" the New York Philharmonic and vice versa.

As Drucker noted, Bernstein also brought significant change to the Philharmonic, hiring the first African-American and female members. Indeed, due to her historic 1966 appointment, bassist Orin O'Brien will always be especially attached to Bernstein's tenure, as she attests:

> I would say, naturally, musicians tend to be more partial to the conductor that hired them, but I think there's a universal appreciation of Bernstein….He was an educator ….When he rehearsed, if you did a piece on Tuesday morning that was new to you and you didn't care for it that much, by Thursday morning he had convinced you that this was a wonderful piece and you would love it just the way he did, because he'd point out everything about it that was different and interesting and this is why he chose it. So it was a revelation, every rehearsal.
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> I know when I first joined, I sat in back of the viola section and there were a couple of violists there that had played with Toscanini and, of course, they were critical of everybody. (Just like I'm critical of everybody after Bernstein. It's the same thing, the way it is now.) And I remember one of them…counted Bernstein stopped 86 times during the first movement of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony in the first hour. Now that's more than one a minute. But I thought everything he said was *interesting* so I didn't mind. *They* minded because it wasn't their tradition of Toscanini's very little speaking, mostly yelling, but mostly conducting. Bernstein wanted to tell you every last thing about every last note in the piece and I thought that was an endearing characteristic and it helped me understand more. And it was interesting. It was never, never dull and never irrelevant….
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> It's precious and that's why I'm glad we have the Young People's Concerts on DVD with Bernstein because basically that's the way he was in rehearsal. Basically that's exactly the way he was. So what wouldn't

> be wonderful and interesting for a musician to listen to that? It was wonderful. It was a wonderful era.[376]

O'Brien obviously relished Bernstein's expenditure of his professorial instincts upon the orchestra, and Drucker builds upon those threads, emphasizing that, for all the glitz, Bernstein was a music director of substance, as well. Drucker remembers:

> Rehearsals were very tough with him. He was like a dog with a bone sometimes. He did a lot of repeating, a lot of repetitious work, getting exactly what he wanted. He was tenacious that way. It was not, "Oh, this is only music. Let's get through with it."…He was very, very much into it and he would work very hard….[377]
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> He would do whole swaths of material from given composers….He would try to give exposure to very modern, present-day (of that day) composers. Some of the works he probably didn't care for but he gave them a voice. He saw that the public could handle thorny things. I guess it was his teaching genes. He wanted to show what there was and he didn't have to play it safe. After all, everything comes to New York or is in New York to start with, where there's an audience for everything.[378]

While seeking to educate both the audiences and the players, Bernstein generously allowed the spotlight illuminating his every move to shine upon the orchestra he led. Furthermore, he managed to raise up the entire Philharmonic community, instilling a new sense of identity. Drucker summarizes:

> It was one of the most exciting of *my* six decades. It was a defining moment, that decade, I feel, for the art of this country and the world….I think there was a lot of pride during the Bernstein years….He got you, in a certain sense, to play better than you could. It sounds cliché-ish, but it's

[376] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[377] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[378] Ibid.

> not. It's a reaction, a chemical reaction, that you were drawn into it and you were convinced, and you just had to do it.[379]

Unfortunately, once an ensemble experiences such pride and purpose, any sort of change will invariably be viewed as a let-down. When Bernstein set down his baton as music director in 1969, he was granted the title of Laureate Conductor, acknowledging his unseverable ties with the Philharmonic. The impression of anti-climax following Bernstein's departure was only heightened by the fact that his announced successor, Pierre Boulez, was not going to take up the post until 1971. Though George Szell was to serve as music adviser and senior guest conductor for two seasons, his death on July 30, 1970, further deepened the vacuum at the Philharmonic podium. It was during this uncertain period that bassist Jon Deak joined the orchestra, as he explains:

> I happened to be at a juncture point between Leonard Bernstein, Pierre Boulez, and a care-taking situation with George Szell. This all occurred in 1969. At that time, it was just Bernstein and Szell and I was able to play for both of them. And, when I was still on probation in 1970 or '71, Pierre Boulez, when he assumed directorship, asked all of the people who had come in in the last two years to re-audition for him, so I got to play for all three of the gentlemen. Actually, at that time, being brash and young, I enjoyed the opportunity. So that was fun.[380]

Born in Budapest in 1897, Szell led the Cleveland Orchestra from 1946, the year he became an American citizen, until his death. As Drucker describes him, he could not have been a more different figure than Bernstein:

> Szell came with a large reputation as a classicist and as a task master of the old school. You hear all the old stories about Szell rehearsing at

[379] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 5, 2011.

[380] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

> Berlin in a wild kind of way, very hard work, and at the interval the manager said to him, "Herr Szell, this is not a matter of life and death." And Szell was reported to say, "Yes, it is."…He was a complete music director in that sense. He was tough. He was relentless. And his interest, of course, was in the classics, where he stayed for the most part. He had a great integrity for what he did. There's no question about it. He was a conductor of his time. His performances of the masterpieces of that 19th century, and the early 20th century perhaps, were among the best. He was a true master conductor.[381]

Following Bernstein, an entirely modern musician deeply connected with the Philharmonic community, this stern, European-born conductor was a return to the days of Walter, who had held a similar kind of temporary position two decades earlier. Surrounded by the same unapproachable aura, his one season must have been a stark contrast for the members awaiting the next music director.

Pierre Boulez: Composer with a Mission

> Composers dropped out of the music director bracket early in the [twentieth] century as the two occupations drifted inexorably apart. One was perceived as spiritual and other-worldly, the other belonged all too obviously to the material world of power and wealth….Composers were permitted to conduct on ceremonial occasions and when they were stony broke or creatively fallow. Rachmaninov and Hindemith, Stravinsky and Britten, commanded respect with a baton without ever achieving positions of authority. The composer-conductor as a joint vocation expired with Mahler and Strauss….Music had become a business whose directors were obliged to subjugate creative fantasies to fiscal reality.
>
> Paradoxically, it was within earshot of Wall Street that the composer-conductor made his last stand before extinction. New York became, for the only time in its history, a mecca for serious musicians between 1958 and 1977 as two creators tested their radical theories on a willing public. One believed fervently that everyone could be made to love music—that is, to love him. The other held with equal force that intelligent people could be weaned from an addiction to melody and persuaded to accept an

[381] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

> ascetic rulership—his own. Both left an indelible imprint on a new generation of listeners….[382]

As Norman Lebrecht outlines in his 1991 book, *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power*, the New York Philharmonic did make the rather unusual decision to appoint another composer-conductor to succeed Bernstein as music director. Though they were also contemporaries, the 44-year-old French musician evoked a far different image than the maestro fondly known throughout the world as "Lenny." Boulez had catapulted himself onto the classical music scene at a young age with his zealous advocacy for rigorous serialism and corresponding disdain for tonality, as expressed in such incendiary writings as his 1952 declaration, "Schoenberg Is Dead."[383] Having never set out to become a conductor, his initial forays into the field included leading the 1956 Paris premiere of his own most highly regarded chamber work, *Le marteau sans maître*. By the time he made his New York Philharmonic debut in March 1969, he had risen through the ranks to attain upcoming positions at both the Cleveland Orchestra and BBC Orchestra. During his four-week stint as guest conductor, he created a stir with some dismissive comments regarding not only any prospects of assuming leadership of the New York Philharmonic, but also New York and American music in general. Therefore, unlike Bernstein's logical coronation, when the Boulez appointment was announced in June 1969, a certain wariness was not to be unexpected. Lebrecht encapsulates:

> To follow Bernstein, the New York Philharmonic chose his opposite. No two musicians were more unalike than the sensual, extrovert Bernstein and the ascetic Pierre Boulez whose compositions and personality appeared austere and monochrome by comparison….All they had in common was an aspiration to compose, conduct and instruct, an irresistible charisma

[382] Norman Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power* (Birch Lane Press, 1991), 177.

[383] Pierre Boulez, "Schoenberg Is Dead," *Score*, May 1952.

> and an intellect that ranged formidably across the woof and warp of western thought….[384]
>
> [Boulez] was the ideal elucidator of modernism….In Boulez's outlook, the main stream of music ran from Bach through Beethoven, to Wagner and Mahler, then to Schoenberg and Webern and, finally, himself. Yet he refrained from exploiting his position to perform his own music….Boulez never sought stardom. His aim in becoming music director was not to gain glory but to advance a revolution.[385]

Though Bernstein had frequently exposed his audiences to diverse contemporary compositions, the concept of a music director helming a "revolution" is more reminiscent of Mitropoulos, a connection bolstered by Drucker's depiction of Boulez:

> I found him to be very, very exciting from a few angles. For one thing, he brought repertoire that we hadn't played….We learned how to play certain pieces…and the interesting thing is that you learned them fairly fast because…the difficult passages he conducted exactly the same as the easy passages, with such reliability that you got to play a very complex work very fast because you knew what he was going to do and it was *there*. He had great conducting technique and certainly you needed it for that kind of music….[386]
>
> Some parts of the audience were fearful of the repertoire that he would bring. And, if one examined his programming, actually, he did quite a lot of standard works…. Perhaps he didn't make a fuss over certain standard works, where somebody would come and conduct a Brahms symphony like it was the only thing that existed. (And he'd had to conduct a few Brahms symphonies.) Maybe he wasn't as involved with them because there wasn't as much of a challenge to plumb anything new out of a work that's played so much. I feel that his emphasis was on teaching new repertoire to an audience and to an orchestra.[387]

[384] Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power*, 184.

[385] Ibid., 185-186.

[386] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

[387] Ibid.

Drucker clearly admires how strongly Boulez felt about what he took on as his mission as music director. Like Mitropoulos, he had identifiable goals about educating and expanding the perspectives of both the members of the Philharmonic and the audiences they played for, employing his expertise to advance a specific selection of orchestral literature. As Drucker continues, further parallels emerge:

> The extra concerts, the special events, were really exciting. You had a chance to play in smaller combinations, where the audience could be close to you, where you were acknowledged individually, more than just as one of 100-plus players….[388]
>
> We played some of these *very* modern works that were written for smaller groups, and got a chance to really learn them, which we wouldn't have been able to do with anyone else.[389]

Just as Mitropoulos encouraged the formation of chamber groups, Boulez devoted a great deal of time to two new concert series. "Prospective Encounters" were intended to promote both performances of contemporary music and conversations between composers, players, and audience members. For "Rug Concerts," the orchestra performed on the floor, in close contact with listeners seated on cushions spread out on the titular rugs. Through those programs, Boulez, like Mitropoulos, genuinely strove to bridge the intimidating chasm between the Philharmonic community and its audience. Unfortunately, the travails Boulez faced also evoked the waning days of the Mitropoulos years. Once again, increasing complaints from ticket buyers and critics culminated in an infamous March 1973 *New York Times* article, "Boulez at the Philharmonic: The Iceberg Conducteth," in which Stephen E. Rubin asserted: "Boulez's intellectualized approach to the music held dearest by the majority of his audience has tended to make these very

[388] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

[389] Ibid.

listeners even more hostile and less responsive to his brand of brainy music-making."[390] Ultimately, Boulez stepped down after only six seasons, in 1977.

Yet, for any sense of discord that may have marred Boulez's Philharmonic tenure, his actions continually revealed the depth of his commitment to the community. Deak, who was elevated to Associate Principal Bass by Boulez in 1973, had strong ties to this fellow composer, as he professed in the previous chapter, and recalls:

> Boulez was much more detail-oriented [than Bernstein] and yet was able to pull together the whole effect, particularly of the French Impressionists, of Debussy and Ravel and Fauré and some of the others a little bit earlier. Franz Liszt was a favorite of his and so on. He was able to really pull together compelling interpretations of those works *and* insist on technical cleanliness, accuracy, unanimity, and so forth. I'll never forget him going over *Daphnis and Chloé*….He tuned each one of those 32nd-notes one-by-one before he made a recording….There was that movie that was out at that time, *The French Connection*. They used to call him "The French Correction."…
>
> We did the Jacob Druckman solo bass piece called *Valentine* [at a "Prospective Encounter"]. He had heard this piece and he said, "Why don't you try this piece?" *He* approached me and I said, "Well, certainly."…So I learned it and it turned out to be a success and a kind of turning point for me. And he afforded that so I really am very grateful to him.[391]

Deak's obvious affection for Boulez and his mentorship and interest in his own compositional and performing endeavors calls attention to the interesting dichotomy surrounding Boulez's role as music director. For all his perceived coldness, or distance, he was actually closely involved with the orchestra, fostering opportunities for individual expression, constantly seeking to raise the performance level and achieve higher standards, and trying to help the Philharmonic

[390] Stephen E. Rubin, "Boulez at the Philharmonic: The Iceberg Conducteth," *The New York Times*, March 25, 1973.

[391] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

community become more relevant to and a greater presence within the New York cultural scene. In particular, by devising creative concert initiatives, he attempted to reach different, potentially younger, audiences, while, as Drucker and Deak attest, providing members of the Philharmonic with new forums for artistic growth. As he himself explained in Jean Vermeil's 1996 book, *Conversations with Boulez: Thoughts on Conducting*:

> I think that, in large orchestras especially…there's a tendency to grind everyone into a kind of anonymity. I'm not referring to the winds…nor to the percussionists….I'm thinking of the strings….They're always enclosed in an ensemble, always anonymous ….In the orchestras I've conducted, I've always managed to divide them into two, so as to perform works for a small orchestra or for a chamber orchestra. As far as was possible, I've always favored chamber music groups because I feel it's essential to good health. I would actually call this a self-serving way of seeing things, because if you have groups of musicians working in chamber music formats…the ensemble as a whole benefits enormously. People work harder, their technique improves, and their interest in programming is stimulated too.[392]

As one of those string players Boulez was concerned about, O'Brien believes he did not receive enough of a chance to advance his vision for the orchestra, lamenting:

> I have a soft spot for Pierre Boulez because he really believed in the Second Viennese School and I enjoyed many of the things he did. I felt that he didn't want to conduct the classical repertoire and that wasn't part of the original bargain. It was supposed to be Szell doing everything up to 1910 and Boulez doing everything contemporary and then Szell died. So Boulez got the whole pie instead of just his segment of it. It was kind of unfair.
>
> But he has not come back to guest conduct us except twice and that is a disappointment. Once, we were on tour in Chicago and I went to a rehearsal of the Chicago Symphony….Boulez was backstage because he was conducting them and I went up to him and said, "Pierre, Pierre, I'm so jealous. You go and conduct Chicago and Cleveland. I'm so jealous."

[392] Jean Vermeil, *Conversations with Boulez: Thoughts on Conducting*, trans. Camille Naiseh, (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1996), 100.

> And he says, "Sometimes jealousy is a good thing," and gave me a big hug. He's much warmer and more friendly than he ever was during those six years with us because the critics gave him a terrible time. He had a tough time. To follow Bernstein—who could follow Bernstein? Let's face it, this was a very tough act to follow. If he had been like ten years later, it would have been a much bigger success.[393]

O'Brien uncannily provides possibly the best epitaph for Boulez's tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic: "Who could follow Bernstein?" As she suggests, in hindsight, his personality, demeanor, and predilections may very well have been subject to undue levels of scrutiny simply because they contrasted so starkly with the overwhelming presence and heightened theatricality of his predecessor. As Peter Heyworth explained in a 1973 *New Yorker* profile, "Taking Leave of Predecessors":

> Almost to a fault, he is devoid of that exhibitionism which orchestral players find so hard to endure….Boulez himself makes light of his achievements as a conductor….In his view, the ability to conduct is simply the ability to read a score and then make the music sound the way one's inner ear has heard it. The idea of "interpretation" as something a conductor is there to impose on a work is foreign to his approach…. Boulez conducts notes, and not the emotions they generate in him. If they are correctly perceived and accurately played, they will, he implies, realize the emotional world of a score more faithfully than any "interpretation" a conductor may impose on them.[394]

As O'Brien conjectures, what was viewed in the 1970s as "coldness" and "distance," might have been considered more favorably as fidelity to the score a mere decade later.

Drucker, Deak, and O'Brien embraced the mission Boulez set forth for the Philharmonic, one that he did remain true to for six years. In succeeding Bernstein, he forged his own path as music director and, like Mitropoulos, his strong ideals may have hastened his departure.

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[393] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[394] Peter Heyworth, "Profiles: Taking Leave of Predecessors, Pt. II," *The New Yorker*, March 31, 1973, 47.

Drucker, in his final summation, salutes Boulez for what he brought to the orchestra from 1971 to 1977:

> He was a very honorable man, one with a tremendous background. I always loved his rehearsals and his concerts because of this trait, this way of explaining….Boulez was very approachable. He was somebody one could talk to and he was a straight-on person….He was as close to a perfectionist as you could get….[395]
>
> He had a lot of young people in the orchestra that were looking forward to the challenge of playing difficult music….I would say his tenure was a short one in the history of the Philharmonic but one that's very memorable because of what he was. He definitely made a mark. As far as reaching out to the New York audience and to the New York music world, he did, and I think he made an impact.[396]

Nevertheless, the Philharmonic board opted to signal an abrupt change in direction for the orchestra, selecting a new music director who was the complete antithesis of Boulez. The announcement was made in February 1975, with over two years remaining in Boulez's contract, that, after a season of guest conductors, Zubin Mehta, a native of India, would take up the podium in 1978, at the age of 42.

Zubin Mehta: Bringing L.A. to N.Y.

> …conducting is increasingly becoming a field for younger, more vibrant men—all the more so because of the overriding example of Leonard Bernstein. His projection and box-office appeal have made him as much the model for conductors in his era as Toscanini was in his….In this image-conscious culture, every orchestra wants its conductor to have some of Bernstein's incalculable personality force ….
>
> Among young conductors today, one who has this emanation—plus musicianship—to an extraordinary degree is Bombay-born Zubin Mehta,

[395] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[396] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

> conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Though he is only 31, Mehta managed the formidable feat of adapting to Western culture, then preciously stormed the most daunting redoubts of European music….At 24, he was named conductor of the Montreal Symphony, and a year later won the same post with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, thus becoming not only the youngest conductor of a leading U.S. orchestra but also the only man ever to direct two major orchestras in North America at once….
>
> Even the English translation of his first name—"powerful sword"—seems to personify his character. In Los Angeles, strangers hail him as "Zubi baby."…He has a young man's affinity for bold, large-scale works—especially from the late 19th and early 20th centuries—that glow with color and abound with dramatic contrasts. His concern is not detail but sweep and sound.[397]

Not long before Mehta's visage graced the cover of this January 19, 1968 issue of *Time Magazine*, he made a faux pas that was reminiscent of Boulez, expressing similar disdain for the directorship of the New York Philharmonic and the allegedly intractable nature of its players. His originally scheduled debut was scuttled, and he did not appear before the orchestra, olive branch in hand, until May 1974. By that time, in addition to the rapid professional ascent and personal appeal chronicled above, he had already demonstrated an ability to remain committed to successive orchestras. He stayed with the Montreal Symphony from 1961 to 1967 and only left the Los Angeles Philharmonic, after 16 years, to come to New York in 1978; concurrently, he developed a uniquely enduring relationship with the Israel Philharmonic, where he was appointed music advisor in 1969, music director in 1977, and, eventually, Music Director for Life in 1981.

As music director, the change Mehta brought to the New York Philharmonic in 1978 was immediate and profound, as Drucker outlines:

[397] "Gypsy Boy," *Time Magazine*, January 19, 1968.

> Pierre Boulez and Zubin Mehta were, personality-wise, different. Of course, Boulez is a composer also, and a man of complexity and…had tremendous talent in knowing what he heard and how to rehearse complex material….Now, Zubin, on the other hand, was a great performer. He really appealed to an audience and could reach an audience emotionally. There was an urgency to what he did and an excitement and strength and, I would say, a lot of passion. Boulez, on the other hand, was more controlled in his reaching of the public. There wasn't this performer aspect so much. Both were completely the most well-trained of musicians. Both of them were trained to the full, but one was the performer and the other was more of the professor.[398]

In his comparison, Drucker draws parallels between Mehta and Bernstein, and as he continues, he frequently alludes to a sense of rejuvenation emanating throughout the orchestra:

> With Zubin, the repertoire was very huge and you did a lot of interesting pieces, not just the usual classical repertoire. It was very exciting to have somebody as young and very vigorous as a new music director….You got challenged to learn a lot of new things….[399]

> He was certainly interesting to watch. As an accompanist for a soloist, I think he was the best I've ever seen….He was in the '80s, which was a really wonderful decade, with all the great tours, the excitement of going all over the world….We made loads of recordings (in that it was still the era of recordings)….[400]

> It was easy for Zubin to speak to people and to speak to an audience. I think he brought a humanity. He brought humor to what he said to people and there was an approachability that was very folksy. He could speak on various levels and with a superior intelligence and grasp of issues. I felt that when one went with him somewhere as a group, as an orchestra, with Zubin, it was a real unified effort. It gave a good feeling to the people that could be part of it.[401]

[398] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 9, 2011.

[399] Ibid.

[400] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[401] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 9, 2011.

Drucker positions Mehta as a charismatic, articulate figure, intent on bringing the members of the Philharmonic together to reach as wide a public as possible. He seemingly had no particular agenda regarding programming, and less of a preconceived notion about his overarching role as music director than his immediate predecessors. Instead, his focus appeared to be more purely performance-based. Deak recalls:

> [Mehta] had an incredible knack for doing events that would be like fundraisers and holiday events, and for bringing in great soloists like Pavarotti, and Kathy Battle, and, of course, Itzhak Perlman, and that whole crowd. He was very close to them. I love that old videotape of him playing the "Trout" Quintet because Zubin was a bass player. (And he was very good with the bass section, by the way. He was excellent with us. He really did care about and pay attention to the bass section.) He played the "Trout" Quintet on that old videotape, which was one of the last tapes that Jacqueline du Pré ever performed before she became ill. Pinky Zukerman was playing viola. Itzhak was playing violin, and Danny Barenboim was playing piano….So that was fun to watch. He never entirely lost his feeling for being a bass player. That was good….
>
> Zubin was very good with international events. He liked to interject himself. We went into South America in 1982 just after the war between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands….He was involved in world politics, certainly with the struggles in the Middle East and so forth. He was always very involved, so that characterized his tenure.[402]

While Deak held Boulez in especial esteem due to their connection as fellow composers, he related to Mehta through their mutual background on bass. He feels that, by maintaining some connection with his own performing past, Mehta was better able to interact with the players. Moreover, as Deak points out, Mehta increasingly became known for taking both vocal and musical actions to call attention to worldwide events, some related to his activities in Israel, and others more widespread. In so doing, he brought greater exposure to the orchestras he led, including the New York Philharmonic.

[402] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

If Mehta lacked the kind of "mission" that had motivated every aspect of Boulez's years as music director, he was, as both Drucker and Deak suggest, able to return some of Bernstein's glamour to the Philharmonic, infusing the spirit of his Los Angeles days into his highly publicized New York events, including many televised concerts on the "Live from Lincoln Center" programs that started airing on PBS in 1976. Trombonist David Finlayson, who joined the orchestra in 1985, enthuses:

> Zubin was very flamboyant. Audiences gravitated to him. He had a magnetism. The attention you get from the audiences, and how they respond to each conductor, is amazing. And you felt with Zubin that he was a star as soon as he walked out on stage. He was basically a star before he even came here. He was very well known, young, extremely talented, very well-connected. And, of course, he hired me to be in the New York Philharmonic, so I was very attracted to how he conducted the late Romantic composers: Mahler, Bruckner, Strauss. I thought he did those beautifully, and that's the height of trombone-playing. I think those composers really pushed the trombone to a whole new level, that period of music. So I was really interested in playing with a conductor who really pushed that kind of music.[403]

Finlayson was obviously impressed by Mehta's larger-than-life persona and associations, both reminiscent of the Bernsteinian luster; the manner in which Drucker, Deak, and Finlayson all casually refer to "Zubin" only strengthens such evocations of "Lenny." Just as Deak appreciated how Mehta approached the bass section, Finlayson was favorably predisposed to a music director whose own programming proclivities aligned with the repertoire featuring his section of the orchestra. Finally, in acknowledging Mehta for appointing him, he touches upon the important fact that Mehta did bring more to New York than a superficial Hollywood rolodex of famous names. Transferring his strong sense of loyalty, he led the Philharmonic for an unprecedented thirteen seasons, leaving his imprint on the orchestra through the personnel decisions he made.

[403] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

Most visibly, and significantly, early in Mehta's tenure he drew directly from his West Coast connections to appoint a new Concertmaster, Glenn Dicterow, in 1980. Dicterow, who made his solo debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the age of 11, later returned to perform as Associate Concertmaster and Concertmaster of that orchestra, where his own father, Harold Dicterow, was stationed as Principal Second Violin for 52 years. Sitting in his office, near the music director's office in Avery Fisher Hall, Dicterow explains:

> Typically, a concertmaster position is usually an invited position….It's very important for a music director and a concertmaster to see pretty much eye-to-eye and to communicate well….So I think that's a little bit more *specialized*. Of course, there's only one concertmaster and it's an important position and the résumés are looked at very, very carefully….
>
> I think there's a reason why they created this office on the fourth floor….It's sort of a nice proximity to be able to knock on his door and for him to knock on my door. This closeness, I think, is important, this conduit, because it reflects on the rest of the orchestra, being a representative. I think it's wonderful to have this intimacy with the music director and problems get discussed and sometimes resolved. Sometimes they can't be resolved but life goes on.[404]

As Dicterow became the face of the New York Philharmonic community for the next 34 years, longer than any other concertmaster in the orchestra's history, he was also a lasting legacy of the careful consideration Mehta gave to each of his 42 appointments. As previously cited in Chapter 1, this figure meant that not only was Mehta responsible for hiring over a third of the musicians in the orchestra, but also that he finally began the process of chipping away at the gender disparity within the Philharmonic, leaving the orchestra in 1991 with 18 new female members. Even as Mehta became, like his predecessors, subject to increasingly heightened diatribes in the press, his judgment in hiring still often remained sacrosanct. In a January 1985 article in *New*

[404] Glenn Dicterow, interview by author, March 3, 2010.

York entitled "Mehta Faces the Music," for instance, Peter G. Davis does approvingly note how, "Mehta has taken on almost 30 new, mostly young musicians since he arrived."[405]

Therein lies the paradox surrounding Mehta's tenure that does at least tenuously connect him with Boulez, the predecessor with whom he had seemingly nothing in common. For, as critics hurled accusations of unimaginative programming, lack of inspiration and/or substance, and charges of insufficient discipline reminiscent of the Mitropoulos era, Mehta constantly proved himself to be an extremely committed cheerleader for and promoter of the Philharmonic community. As discussed in Chapter 2, in 1983 he reinstated an enduring series of Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble concerts that have provided an outlet for both individuality and camaraderie among the players. In his 2009 autobiography, *Zubin Mehta: The Score of My Life*, he lays out a rationalization for the importance of such playing opportunities that is similar to thoughts shared by Boulez:

> It is a European tradition, far more than an American one, for orchestra players to play chamber music. I have tried to encourage musicians of all the orchestras I've worked with to play chamber music—in New York as well as in Tel Aviv. One necessarily plays differently when one is part of a small group. Chamber musicians have to listen to each other much more sensitively, which then helps them enormously when they go back to their large ensembles. The fact that chamber music is played without a conductor obliges the musicians to interpret all aspects of a masterpiece, from the tempo to the most minute intricacies. This makes the musicians more receptive and enables them to play together much more intimately. The consequent influence on their orchestral playing is entirely positive.[406]

If Mehta demonstrated his concern for the Philharmonic community through such tried-and-true ways as conscientious hiring and cultivating chamber music, he also chose, to an

[405] Peter G. Davis, "Mehta Faces the Music," *New York*, January 14, 1985, 30.

[406] Zubin Mehta, *Zubin Mehta: The Score of My Life*, with Renate Gräfin, trans. Anu Pande, (Amadeus Press, 2009), 92.

unusual extent, to enable individual orchestra members to partake of his ever present limelight. As delineated in *New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years, A Tribute to Zubin Mehta*, published near the end of his tenure in 1990:

> Zubin Mehta is frequently quoted on the subject of the excellence of the individual musical talent in the New York Philharmonic. Philharmonic musicians have consistently borne out Mr. Mehta's praise, turning in sparkling concerto performances during his tenure. Philharmonic audiences have come to anticipate regular solo appearances by artists like Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow and Principal Clarinetist Stanley Drucker. Additionally, 30 musicians made their Philharmonic solo debuts during the past 13 years. Mr. Mehta made it a practice to feature soloists from the Orchestra on tour as well as at home.[407]

Violinist Yoko Takebe was not only hired by Mehta in 1979, but also found herself a beneficiary of his forward-thinking programming philosophy. She still seems overwhelmed as she ponders making her Philharmonic solo debut in 1983, performing a Vivaldi Concerto for Four Violins with three colleagues:

> Zubin asked if I wanted to play….So I said, "Oh, that's great. I'd love to play."…That was a new thing, for a *member* of the string section to get up and play and be a soloist. That's something that Zubin tried to do….It was very, very nice as a member to be able to play solo. That was a great privilege.[408]

She clearly remains indebted to Mehta for caring enough about the Philharmonic community in general to seek out members other than the concertmaster or principal players for artistically invigorating solo opportunities.

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[407] *New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years, A Tribute to Zubin Mehta*, 35.

[408] Yoko Takebe, interview by author, June 9, 2010.

Sherry Sylar, who was appointed Associate Principal Oboe by Mehta in 1984, offers an account of her 1989 Philharmonic solo debut, performing a Handel Oboe Concerto, that reveals even more about the music director's relationship with the players:

> We were on tour and Zubin was on our airplane and I just went up to him and said, "Gee, I'd like to play a concerto someday." I wouldn't have expected to play a big piece like the Strauss, but a little Baroque concerto was a good way to start out that part of my career….He's a marvelous accompanist and there was never any moment that I wasn't just totally enjoying and in love with the whole experience.[409]

Clearly, for all his star quality, Mehta was not an aloof or disinterested figure, and, instead, from 1978 to 1991, he actively involved himself in shoring up the entire New York Philharmonic, both as a whole and, whenever possible, individually. Though not a composer, champion, or educator, he was, as music director, more along the lines of a community promoter and publicist, in accordance with the conductorial principles set out in his autobiography:

> The image of the conductor as a dictator who wields absolute power seems false to me. This type of conductor, the feared and simultaneously adored chief of hundreds of musicians whose well-being depends entirely on him, undoubtedly existed in the past. However, those times are over….I always try to be available to talk with my musicians, something I hope I have always been able to let them know. The musicians need to feel certain that they can depend on me and my basic musical ideas. Obviously, this also means that everyone has to submit to some basic discipline….I will allow myself a not altogether serious comparison: as a conductor I see in myself a friendly cultural policeman who shows people the way and directs everything….A conductor must also be the conscience of the orchestra. He or she is committed not only to discipline, but most of all to the composer's intent…[410]

[409] Sherry Sylar, interview by author, March 2, 2011.

[410] Mehta, *Zubin Mehta: The Score of My Life*, 170-171.

Despite his approachability and democratic ideals, Mehta's tenure was, in one vitally important way, representative of the typical top-down style of management that had guided the selection of New York Philharmonic music directors ever since the newly installed board of directors hired Mahler in 1909. Having himself been appointed by Mehta in 1982, violist and active committee member Kenneth Mirkin explains:

> Zubin Mehta was, I think, the last time where the orchestra had *no* input into the music director. The board would just make the decision and then announce that so-and-so is your new music director. I mean, not that we would be disappointed with it, but it's theoretically possible to be disappointed with the choice. I think starting with Kurt Masur was the first time that the orchestra members had some input. We didn't actually have veto power over anything, but we had the Artistic Committee (which actually was the one committee I *wasn't* on). The Artistic Committee would give input into who they thought would work best with the orchestra, and then it actually ended up, when it came down to having final candidates for it, a couple of members from the Artistic Committee would fly over with management to Europe and try to woo certain conductors….I think management found it helpful in the process, as far as courting music directors, to have musicians along to help the process. So that first time that we did that was with Kurt Masur, and it's happened every other time since.[411]

Thus, when it was announced in April 1990 that Kurt Masur was to succeed Mehta, this both seemingly unexpected and staid choice of a distinguished 62-year-old German conductor actually broke new ground in the relationship between the music director and the Philharmonic community.

[411] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

> Basically, that was the first time that members of the orchestra had any hand in the selection of the music director, at least since the 19th century….The Artistic Advisory Committee was invited to take part because the board realized that it could use the expertise of the musicians. So various conductors were courted and interviewed and, in varying degrees, looked at closely. Claudio Abbado was big in that search. Colin Davis figured in it. Leonard Slatkin even figured in it at that point. There were a number of conductors. Even [Bernard] Haitink, who was already getting rather elderly at that time….
>
> Kurt Masur was, in some ways, an unlikely candidate. He was not one of the most loved and absolutely highest-ranking touring conductors. He was ensconced in East Germany with the Gewandhaus and had a strong reputation. He came and conducted us and many people liked him and many people didn't. This is my view, of course. This is a very subjective view. We tend to go back and forth. We went from Bernstein to Boulez. I mean, there's a contrast there. We went from Boulez to Mehta: very different. And then, going from Mehta to Masur, who was, I think, seen as someone who was intensely committed to music in a very forceful and passionate way. Not that Zubin wasn't, but when you change, you tend to change kind of radically. So there it was, and that's how we got Kurt Masur. [412]

Deak, who at that time served as chairman of the Artistic Advisory Committee, generously offers an invaluable glimpse into a historic selection process. Violinist Newton Mansfield, who had already devoted nearly 40 years to committee work since joining the Philharmonic in 1961, is not wont to mince words, and candidly supplies additional information about how such a decision was reached:

> That year we had decided on…Claudio Abbado. They even had a dinner with champagne and everything else. And everything had been decided. He was coming to the Philharmonic. And then he got an offer from Berlin and he zonked out. And we were stuck because we were all set with this man. Then we started looking at Kurt Masur and basically Kurt Masur had, at that time, just finished more or less taking part in this political

[412] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

> thing in East Germany, where he supposedly helped to settle the whole situation with the government in a peaceful manner. So he had gained a great deal of stature through that. But, of course, he was not well known here and we had doubts about that. Eventually it was decided that we should go ahead and do it—he was a very solid musician—and try to go ahead and do a publicity campaign to make him a bit better known in this country. And it worked out very well. [413]

In keeping with Mansfield's insight, press coverage of the New York Philharmonic's announcement did focus primarily on Masur's political interventions and the involvement of orchestra members in his appointment, as in this April 1990 article from *Time Magazine*, "New York Gets a Revolutionary," by Michael Walsh:

> Last week, in a stunning surprise, the Philharmonic's quest finally came to an end with the selection of a relative unknown: East German maestro Kurt Masur, currently the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Masur, 62, is a Kapellmeister in the best Central European tradition, and it was exactly this quality that appealed to the Philharmonic's search committee, which for the first time also included some of the orchestra's musicians….
>
> …last fall Masur unexpectedly found himself helping to conduct the peaceful revolution that brought down his country's Communist government….When police cracked down hard on a Leipzig demonstration, Masur could no longer hide his sympathies. Together with some of the city authorities…he drafted an appeal for nonviolence that was read aloud….The police backed down. The protests spread. One month later, the Berlin Wall crumbled. For a time there was talk that Masur might follow the path blazed by other artists…and stand for office. But the conductor's political career was over….Now American audiences will have a chance to hear what he has to say.[414]

While Masur's involvement in current events brought attention to his leadership abilities, in the same way Mehta was known as what Mirkin refers to as "sort of a citizen of the world,"

[413] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[414] Michael Walsh, "New York Gets a Revolutionary," *Time Magazine*, April 23, 1990.

that is where the connection between the two successive music directors ends.[415] For, as Deak explained, the Philharmonic members helped engage a completely different kind of conductor, harkening back to Walter. As director of the Gewandhaus since 1970, Masur had burnished his Mendelssohnian lineage, devotedly perpetuating the core German repertoire, and, though his arrival on the New York podium represented a new kind of 20th-century selection process, he himself was more a vestige of 19th-century traditions. Drucker's recollections of Masur emphasize this changing of the guard for the orchestra:

> Kurt Masur was very different, from a personality standpoint, from Zubin Mehta. He was old world. He was very formal. He was not nearly as approachable as Mehta. But this was his history, his background, coming from the old music capital of Leipzig and Dresden. He was, I would say, a product of his environment. He was very focused on what he did because of *where* he was and because of the history….It was a new era and it was going to emphasize different things. Where, perhaps, in the Mehta years, there was a tremendously large repertoire of exciting new pieces and a big mix of interesting soloists and so forth, this was going to be more traditional….[416]

> Orchestrally, I would say there wasn't the kind of meeting of people around the podium in an intermission break of a rehearsal as there were with others. He was the music director of a certain era and he looked the part and he acted the part. He was gruff when he had to be, and impatient when he had to be, and he had his pet phrases. "Mamma Mia" was one of them, and things like that….He could be very cutting in retorts and in comments to the orchestra at times….He could be tough in the old-fashioned mold and maybe short of temper.[417]

Masur resided back up in the ivory tower, with ironclad demarcations separating the maestro from the players below. Yet, even though Masur resorted to dictatorial behaviors, Drucker also

[415] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

[416] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 23, 2011.

[417] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

portrays him as a kind of honorable educator, intent on transplanting the essence of Leipzig into the New York Philharmonic community. He explains: "I would say he instilled in the players a longing for and an attraction to his repertoire, which is basically the permanent collection of any symphony orchestra….There was a great sincerity that you could feel from him in this repertoire."[418] That Masur arrived as music director with such a clear conception of his role won the admiration of Philharmonic members like Mansfield, who describes Masur's tenure as "meaningful," elaborating:

> He had very strong ties to middle-class German music, which is what music is about. Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms: they're all middle-class German types, and he understood that. And also his passion was to give stature to the orchestra. He wanted to be known not so much as a man who had an orchestra given to him, but as a man who was instrumental in making an orchestra independent of conductors: I mean, have a status of their own. It was very important to him….and because of this, I felt very strongly about him eventually.[419]

Principal Cello Carter Brey, who was appointed by Masur in 1996, similarly asserts: "Basically with Kurt Masur, I felt like a middle-aged student of someone who was a living, breathing, walking representative of a certain central European tradition having very much to do with composers like Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms: sort of German core repertoire."[420]

Within the Philharmonic community, there seemed to be two, sometimes simultaneously held, strains of thought regarding the new music director. There was a respect for Masur's dedication to his specific repertoire and his own objectives. Yet, there was also the need to reconcile the complete change in character from his predecessor. Sylar theorizes:

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[418] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[419] Newton Mansfield, interview by author, March 26, 2013.

[420] Carter Brey, interview by author, April 13, 2011.

> It seems to me that, from one music director to the next, it's a pendulum. So, if you have the fiery, passionate nature of Zubin Mehta one term, it's almost a given that the pendulum will swing and you'll have sort of an opposite approach. Which we did. Kurt Masur was a more conservative conductor. He was more insistent on a tone that he wanted the orchestra to achieve. So he was much more focused on getting a sound out of the strings and he was more interested in being sort of precise, whereas Zubin's passion sort of propelled us. Two very different experiences.[421]

Finlayson chooses to focus on how the change at the podium directly affected his section, explaining:

> Kurt was completely different. His emphasis and his strengths, I thought, were in probably the classics: Schumann, Schubert, Beethoven. And anything with voice, anything with choir, he did extremely well. I thought it had a lot of energy. But he didn't want to hear the brass so much, so it was different for us in that he tried to tone us down more, that we weren't quite as verbose as we were with Zubin.[422]

As Deak also addresses the way Masur chose to deal with his section of the Philharmonic, he returns to Drucker's less positive memories of abrasive tendencies:

> One of the things that stands out was his passionate intense involvement in getting things exactly right. He was hard on the orchestra, and you'll hear this again and again. I mean, he said it himself. He said, "I work tough," and boy, he did. One could question as to whether he was always fair to the younger members of the orchestra, fair to the women in the orchestra. He had his favorites and so on, but everybody does. He was particularly hard on my section, the bass section. I think the ensemble was excellent under Masur in general.[423]

[421] Sherry Sylar, interview by author, March 2, 2011.

[422] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

[423] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

Deak, with his direct involvement in Masur's selection, admits that the Philharmonic knew what it was getting and credits the conductor's devotion and ability to achieve results. At the same time, though, Masur obviously created a working environment that could be oppressive. Mirkin remembers:

> He definitely liked to rehearse and rehearse and rehearse and rehearse. When he became music director, he demanded that we have pre-concert rehearsals before every concert on tour. He wanted to just make sure that we got together and played for half an hour before every concert. And that was kind of difficult for us because it messes up your dinner time before a concert and so that was a bit of an adjustment. And sometimes, when he would get nervous and anxious about a concert, he would just keep on rehearsing it sometimes until it just kept getting worse and worse and then he would throw a tantrum and then that would be the end of it. So that got to be kind of frustrating. [424]

Masur never sought to develop the bonhomie that existed between Mehta and the players and, all too often, could instead engender strained interactions, as chronicled in a 1993 *New York Times* article, "Speak Loudly, Carry No Stick," in which James R. Oestreich reported: "Even though he had appeared with the Philharmonic earlier as a guest conductor, no one was quite prepared for his almost fanatical intensity."[425] Nevertheless, some members of the orchestra did see a gradual shift in Masur's demeanor. Drucker reflects: "Masur, of course, was a strict disciplinarian. There was not much levity in the way he worked. Though I think living in New York for those years sort of changed him to an extent. And, being an intelligent man, he adapted to that change."[426] Mirkin similarly discloses:

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[424] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

[425] James R. Oestreich, "Speak Loudly, Carry No Stick," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1993.

[426] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 23, 2011.

> Kurt Masur, I have to hand it to him. I was really impressed. He was coming from a system in East Germany which couldn't have been more different than here, where we had to deal with unions. We got off to a bit of a rocky start with work conditions with him because he was used to dictating how things are done. And I think he enjoyed sort of just learning, and the new process and, after a bit of a rocky start, he really got to love being in New York. I would see him in the neighborhood here, just eating in restaurants and going to movies, and I think he was having a good time in New York. And it showed. He sort of felt like a New Yorker for the time he was here. So that was kind of fun to watch him grow on the job.[427]

Both Drucker and Mirkin feel that simply spending eleven years in New York, from 1991 to 2002, helped Masur acclimate to the cultural differences, allowing him to attain a kind of rapprochement with the members of the Philharmonic. As Principal Viola, however, Cynthia Phelps was in a position to forthrightly address the music director who had appointed her in 1992:

> With Kurt Masur, because he hired me, I felt a certain sense of security, of course. But he's a tough person and he wasn't always personally the most evolved, in that he would lose his temper and put people off guard and make them feel uncomfortable. And, within my first couple of months, he was yelling at the section during a concert, and I went up and I spoke with him about it very passionately. It was really unsettling and, I felt, unnecessary, and he was very warm, and I think the fact that I confronted him made him respect me. And so, at that point, there was always a trust. And that's really the bottom line, a *trust* with your music director. We had a very warm, wonderful relationship for all the years that he was here. [428]

From all these narratives, Masur materializes as a complicated figure, filled with contradictions. Though he could be a formidable dictator, he also cared about engaging the players with the repertoire he valued. The same belief system that led him to become involved in

[427] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

[428] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

politics also compelled him to inculcate an appreciation for the depths of meaning contained within those works and to present polished performances in keeping with traditional standards. Despite having spent over sixty years living and working within an insular East German environment, he demonstrated a willingness to be open to the New York community as a whole. Speaking as a composer who, as discussed in the previous chapter, had one of his works premiered by Masur, Deak professes:

> If he would do a contemporary work, he would be really dedicated to getting it right. And that was my experience with him on my piece and all the other pieces…. Surprisingly, Masur would bring in a lot of jazz musicians. Notably, that was the first time Wynton Marsalis would play with us, really, that I could remember. And Masur brought him in a lot.[429]

It is admittedly both incongruous and impressive that an older, conservative, foreign conductor so boldly attempted to make the New York Philharmonic more relevant, spearheading collaborations with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra that included performances of arrangements from Grieg's *Peer Gynt Incidental Music* in April 1999 and the world premiere of Marsalis's *All Rise* in December 1999. Masur chose to invest his gravitas in giving broader exposure to music drawing upon a wide range of stylistic influences and, by sharing the Philharmonic stage with more African-American musicians, likely encouraged younger, impressionable audience members to envision new possibilities for themselves.

If Masur's tenure was noteworthy for the unprecedented involvement of orchestra members in his selection, it was then especially significant for the way he arrived with a rather medicinal mission to fortify the Philharmonic with a sense of history. In carrying out his goals, he managed to both tyrannize and win the respect of the players. Just as Mehta had brought with

[429] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

him the magnetism, excitement, and variety of Los Angeles, Masur had remained true to the age-old traditions of his Leipzig roots, while also genuinely, if not always successfully, attempting to connect his old world with the new world in which the New York Philharmonic resides. In acknowledgment of all his efforts, he was granted the title Music Director Emeritus upon his 2002 departure. His influence on the Philharmonic was lasting, as Phelps affirms:

> I think, with Kurt Masur, the orchestra was very strong at that point, and we had a certain style of playing that was honed by this Eastern European, German man. He was very, very certain of what he wanted at all times and, when you have somebody with that over a long enough period, the orchestra is very homogenous, even though we're very different players. And that was something, certainly, we didn't want to lose….The orchestra, as a whole, has a lot of say and it's powerful because it feeds on itself. And so I think the decision to go with another very strong, older presence maybe played a part in that. [430]

That "very strong, older presence" was Masur's successor, 72-year-old Lorin Maazel, whose appointment as music director of the New York Philharmonic represented a further evolution in the involvement of the community in such decisions.

Though he achieved prominence principally as a conductor, Maazel was also a composer and violinist. Indeed, born in France to American parents who returned to their native country a few years later, Maazel had a rather unusual background as a child prodigy. According to Lebrecht: "He was…ultimately elusive. He belonged nowhere and was at home everywhere. As a conductor he was the most naturally gifted of his generation, a man who assimilated scores on sight and directed them as if it were the easiest thing in the world. He had been allowed to conduct Toscanini's orchestra at the age of eleven and was the youngest man, and first

[430] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

American, ever to lead an opera at Bayreuth."[431] Only nine years old when he conducted at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, he debuted as a violinist six years later with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which he joined in 1948. His conducting posts included periods as music director of the Cleveland Orchestra from 1972 to 1982 and his own former orchestra in Pittsburgh from 1988 to 1996. Having led the New York Philharmonic at Lewisohn Stadium at the age of twelve in 1942, he made his formal Philharmonic debut twenty years later, but after a 1972 appearance, he did not return for nearly three decades. Quite unexpectedly, his November 2000 stint as guest conductor ended up turning into an extraordinary audition for a more permanent connection with the New York Philharmonic, as the next music director.

Lorin Maazel: The Community's Choice

> When we selected Lorin Maazel, there were actually a couple of other candidates that Zarin Mehta, our executive director, really, really wanted for that job, and they were candidates who the orchestra was not happy with at all. So we had a couple of kind of little testy meetings, saying that these were not people we were really happy with…. And then it was just by a freak chance, because Lorin Maazel happened to be guest conducting. I mean, his name was not even in the running because we hadn't played with him, certainly not since *I* had been in the orchestra, and it's been many, many years, and we assumed that he wasn't interested. But it just worked out very well, his two weeks of guest conducting, and the orchestra just said, "We want *him*," and he, somehow, really liked doing it. So that one just was like a grassroots effort from the orchestra. We just knew that that's who we wanted for our music director at the time, and management gave in, even though that wasn't necessarily their first choice. But it ended up working out very well.[432]

[431] Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power*, 203.

[432] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

With all his years of committee experience, Mirkin volunteers an insider's view to a turn of events that would have seemed unfathomable back when Drucker joined the New York Philharmonic in 1948. Masur's 1991 appointment drew attention for simply involving orchestra members in the process in the first place; now, merely a decade later, the players united to essentially elect Masur's successor. As a member of the Artistic Advisory Committee in 2000, Sylar shares her experience with this sense of empowerment:

> I think we kept pushing for the orchestra to have more and more say in the matter. And when Maazel was hired, I think there were two or three people that the orchestra was well enamored with and we hadn't *seen* Lorin Maazel. So we kept pushing for these other people. It turned out that Lorin was coming to conduct…while we were doing this search. And he had two weeks with the orchestra, which turned out to be a phenomenal success. Basically, he had the orchestra eating out of his hand and we had a big meeting to talk about it. I think at this point the orchestra was having more and more influence on the board's decision, and I think he pretty much ran away with the whole contest after he did his two weeks with us.[433]

On January 30, 2001, only two months after the Philharmonic community expressed backing for Maazel, his appointment was formally announced, and subsequently scrutinized for the significance it held for the larger orchestral community. A headline in *The New York Times* on February 5, 2001, trumpeted, "Musicians Sing Out and Philharmonic Listens."[434] The following day in *The Times*, Doreen Carvajal reported that, "Musicians Are Gaining Bigger Voice In Orchestras":

> When the New York Philharmonic anointed Lorin Maazel as its new music director with widespread approval from its players, the oldest

[433] Sherry Sylar, interview by author, March 2, 2011.

[434] Ralph Blumenthal and Doreen Carvajal, "Musicians Sing Out and Philharmonic Listens," *The New York Times*, February 5, 2001.

> American orchestra was following a quiet but steadily growing national trend to bring musical democracy to the stage. Driven partly by financial strains and declining audiences, many orchestras…are experimenting with power-sharing arrangements that defy the traditional musical hierarchy that placed players under the rule of highly paid conductors and powerful, wealthy board members….Management experts say the advantages of such power-sharing are that it can lead to greater commitment from musicians and more open discussions….[435]

When Maazel assumed directorship of the New York Philharmonic in September 2002, he stepped to the podium with an enormous amount of support from the players. It is interesting, then, that in individual accounts, he does not come across as the figurehead for "musical democracy"[436] one might expect, instead, remaining, as Lebrecht had contended, "elusive."[437] Drucker muses:

> He was the last of my music directors in *my* career. And I knew him from many years before….He was very gifted with his memory and with his grasp of pieces, to be able to memorize them. He had a lot of so-called conductorial technique….His predecessor, Kurt Masur, didn't have the kind of control of the baton that Maazel had. But they were both contemporaries in age. I think they were about a year or two apart at most…I felt that there was continuity in programming. Perhaps a few more complex new works got played during the Maazel time, but I felt that the ongoing motion was carried from one to the next very, very well. I think that one could say the older conductors, perhaps, were caretakers, that they tried to maintain the status quo of excellence.[438]

Drucker categorizes both Masur and Maazel as "caretakers," focused on attaining a certain measure of proficiency in performance. Maazel did not envision any kind of grand plan

[435] Doreen Carvajal, "Musicians Are Gaining Bigger Voices In Orchestras," *The New York Times*, February 6, 2001.

[436] Ibid.

[437] Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power*, 203.

[438] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

for his role as music director, as he was neither an innovator nor an educator. Though American, Drucker connects him with Masur, as another maestro of an earlier time. Yet, as Drucker continues, Maazel emerges, in some respects, as an even more distant figure than Masur:

> Certain rehearsals that might have been longer with Masur were, perhaps, shorter with Maazel. He was efficient in a certain way. Also, he was a different personality than his predecessor, where he was not so interested in communication other than the issue at hand. There wasn't a social aspect to his work. He was very private. Masur, he would speak about a lot of things, with very strong opinions and colorful explanations and stories….Where, in Maazel's case, he was more concise. He didn't tell stories about the pieces and the composers. He was more efficient (if you want to use that term) in preparation, with a very clear baton technique, with very strong opinions about phrasing and about how *he* wanted these phrases to be played. With his predecessor, there was more of a classical, traditional approach. With Maazel, even the classical masterpieces, the pieces that are the permanent collection, were personalized by Maazel, where he would have the orchestra play certain phrases in a different manner than we had done with many other conductors. He knew what he wanted.[439]

Drucker portrays Maazel as an introvert, procuring specific musical details rather than revealing the emotions underlying the music. Finlayson further emphasizes the differences between Maazel and his predecessors:

> Maazel is a whole different style altogether: Very much, "You do your job, we'll do our job." And there was this sort of separation of the two entities, that I felt like I sort of knew Zubin and I knew Kurt. I had many conversations with him. But with Mr. Maazel, I didn't have many conversations with him. He was quite different. And it wasn't that I couldn't go up to him. It's just that he seemed more quiet or more shy in some way. It was really interesting that he wasn't as gregarious as some of the other conductors we've had.[440]

[439] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

[440] David Finlayson, interview by author, April 3, 2013.

Once again, by so naturally referring to Mehta and Masur by their first names, Finlayson aligns them with "Lenny," while also pointedly separating them from "Mr. Maazel." As Principal Viola, Phelps was better able to attempt to breach that distance between music director and players. She recalls:

> When Lorin Maazel came, he's a different creature. He's hard to get to know personally. He holds himself a little bit away. That's his social style. He's rather shy, actually, in social situations, so he comes across as being very removed. So it takes a certain confidence to speak to him and to get him to respond. That's something that was nurtured over the years and we ended up having a very nice relationship. In one of the last years that he was here, I went on tour playing *Harold in Italy* throughout Italy and it was really one of the most unforgettable experiences under his tenure.[441]

In drawing his own contrasts among music directors, Mirkin elaborates upon Drucker's descriptions of Maazel's shorter rehearsals:

> Lorin Maazel really didn't like to rehearse that much. He had an *unbelievable* amount of confidence in himself and I just didn't get the feeling that he particularly enjoyed rehearsing. I mean, he liked performing. And I think he just felt that as long as he was on the podium, everything was going to be fine, and we just didn't need to worry about rehearsals that much because he felt he was the greatest conductor in the world and there was just not a problem….He would almost just routinely let us out of rehearsals early. Often a two-and-a-half hour rehearsal would last an hour-and-a-half. We'd just always get out early from rehearsals. On tour, he didn't like to rehearse at all, so we would just show up and play the concert. So tours were *much*, much easier under Maazel than they were under any of the other conductors. And so we had, I would say, a much easier life with Maazel, although, still, for my ears, I think some of the concerts could have been a little more polished because things were just sometimes left a little bit too much for the last minute. But sometimes they had an exciting quality. When you're not totally rehearsed to death, you don't think. You really have to stay on edge.[442]

[441] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

[442] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

Mirkin provides a compelling narrative that indicates why the Philharmonic members might have been so drawn to Maazel when he appeared as a guest conductor. On the most basic level, they must have immediately grasped how his rehearsal style would improve their working conditions. The attributes Drucker cited, chiefly clarity and efficiency, were a marked contrast from any kind of browbeating they may have experienced during Masur's tenure. As Sylar explains: "Maazel didn't have quite as strong rein as Masur did on the orchestra. Maazel had a fantastic baton technique and the orchestra became very sensitive to that and required fewer rehearsals. And I think it was a noticeable difference."[443]

Like Drucker, Deak believes Maazel fulfilled a caretaker role, and, as befits such a position, he did not stay with the New York Philharmonic for long, leaving in 2009 after seven seasons. While, like Mirkin, Deak acknowledges Maazel's disinclination to rehearse at length, he additionally, and understandably, reveals his delight at again facing a conductor who was a fellow composer. That Maazel was his last music director, after four memorable decades at the Philharmonic, made his tenure even more consequential for Deak, who reminisces:

> Maazel…was a traditionalist who made sure that the standard repertoire was well-performed and well-balanced and presented in a good light. Lorin Maazel was not one to want to rehearse very thoroughly or often and he trusted us to clean up any intonation or articulation problems within sections, which, by in large, I think the orchestra did. It would be subjective as to whether the ensemble of the orchestra, the precision of the orchestra, was better under Masur or under Maazel. That's something you could argue about all day long. It is certain that Maazel made some very wise choices in personnel, so the orchestra really sounded great. Some fantastic new players came in during his tenure….
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> He was a very, very interesting composer, who had at least four faces, four styles, and I don't think that was such a bad thing….I think that was pretty neat and I enjoyed hearing his thought processes as a composer, through a

[443] Sherry Sylar, interview by author, March 2, 2011.

> kind of child-like style, a kind of a Broadway jazz style, and a kind of contemporary music style, and a Romantic style. They were all sometimes mixed in pieces….So that was fun for *me* as a composer. And, when he was retiring the same year I was, actually, or leaving (but he really left) I gave a little speech about that at his ceremony and I think it embarrassed him a little….But he did do at least seven or eight pieces, major orchestral works, with us, of his own.[444]

Clearly able to relate to Maazel on more than one level, Deak also touches upon the concept of "trust" that Principal Bassoon Judith LeClair similarly emphasizes: "When Maazel came, I felt like those were the golden years for me in the orchestra, the best years. He trusted the orchestra; we trusted him. I felt that the orchestra sounded fantastic under him."[445] One of those "fantastic new players" Maazel appointed in 2006, Principal Oboe Liang Wang, uses that term as well:

> In the Philharmonic, there's so many great musicians here and, of course, the music director has a tremendous amount of say in the interpretation. But Stokowski said that, "A great conductor knows how to stay out of the way." Basically, if you have some really phenomenal interpreters on their own instrument, they've probably played the excerpt over and over again, much more so than I think some conductors conduct it. So you have a certain trust in them, and I think that shows greatness in…Maazel….[446]

By fostering trust within the Philharmonic community, Maazel built upon the reservoir of goodwill that originally empowered the players to effectively choose him as their leader. The irony in such a groundswell of approbation is that Maazel held himself completely apart from the orchestra members to a much greater extent than any of his recent predecessors. The players knew they were getting a highly skilled conductor who would run rehearsals in a humane

[444] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

[445] Judith LeClair, interview by author, May 13, 2010.

[446] Liang Wang, interview by author, April 27, 2010.

manner, but he lacked any sense of greater purpose beyond attaining technical brilliance. He did not approach his role with preconceptions, but never found any particular aims along the way, either. He was not prone toward interaction with the members of the Philharmonic, did not envision any new initiatives, undertake any educational endeavors, or champion any specific repertoire; furthermore, he did not attempt to make the Philharmonic community more relevant or to reach out to audiences. He was, truly, a caretaker, who meticulously honed each and every work he conducted for the time he was there and provided a comfortably secure environment for the orchestra members who set a new precedent with his appointment. In short, his tenure may be most memorable for the way it came about.

As Drucker reflects upon his own retirement coinciding with Maazel's departure from the New York Philharmonic in 2009, he simply states:

> It was time for the page to be turned on Lorin Maazel's era, the last man standing from the old days, and to go with a new vision, with a young, vital person, somebody that was courageous, and would bring new works to the stage of the Philharmonic, to be a champion of the new and maintain the standards of the old.[447]

[447] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

Epilogue: The 21st Century Community

> Eras, short and long, will end at the New York Philharmonic next season. Lorin Maazel will end his seven-year run as music director in a blaze of big works, his own music and concertos played by orchestra members….Over his final four programs in June 2009, Mr. Maazel will conduct…Copland's Clarinet Concerto. The…principal clarinetist, Stanley Drucker, will be the [soloist.]…Maazel…also let drop a bombshell that will rattle the woodwind world: Mr. Drucker, who will be celebrating his 60th year with the orchestra—one of the longest tenures in American orchestral history—will retire after next season….Mr. Drucker joined the orchestra in 1948….In 1960 he became principal…and has since grown into something of a legend for wind players. His departure will mean the end of an era of storied American wind players in principal seats who came into their own after World War II.[448]

Reported by Daniel J. Wakin in *The New York Times* on January 11, 2008, the news of Stanley Drucker's forthcoming retirement resonated with an intensity underscoring the widespread stature he had attained over his six decades with the New York Philharmonic. The local boy from Brooklyn had far surpassed every immigrant's dreams for his or her children to make better lives in America, finding a home in the Philharmonic as a teenager and devoting so much of himself to that orchestra that he eventually became the thread that held the metaphorical Philharmonic community quilt together. As Wakin had written in a previous *New York Times* article on November 30, 2007:

> Gustavo Dudamel, classical music's hottest young podium property, conducted several weeks ago at Carnegie Hall…his first appearance in New York. This week he embarked on his maiden voyage with the New York Philharmonic….During a break he returned to the stage to greet the clarinet section, which included…Stanley Drucker, who has been in the orchestra for nearly six decades. "He's a legend," Mr. Dudamel said. "The history of the orchestra is in him."[449]

[448] Daniel J. Wakin, "A Season for Big Works (and Two Grand Finales) at the Phil," *The New York Times*, January 11, 2008.

[449] Daniel J. Wakin, "The Kid's Got Energy. Now Watch Him Conduct.," *The New York Times*, November 30, 2007.

The fact that that spontaneous tribute would come from a 26-year-old Venezuelan conductor further demonstrates the importance of Drucker's career and the realization that such a musician would likely never be seen again. While the Philharmonic community had drastically changed since 1948, so too had the outside community. Thus, as the orchestra would go on without Drucker, and with a new music director, his departure occasioned a reckoning of the future relationship between the Philharmonic community and the community of both loyal audience members and potential newcomers. Though it is all too common to lament the increasing marginalization of classical music, and the concomitant increasing irrelevance of the symphony orchestra, toward the end of Drucker's tenure, there were two particular occasions when the Philharmonic community managed to viscerally connect with a much larger community of listeners, offering hope for the future of this august institution far beyond the 2008-09 season.

September 11, 2001

> One of the highlights [of Kurt Masur's tenure] *I* will remember was right after 9/11 when we were all reeling from that, and we really were….So right away we cancelled our regular season opener and we played the Brahms Requiem instead. And I had questioned that at first. If I had been music director I don't know if I would have chosen that piece. First of all, it's by a German, and it's from another century, and it's *in* German. We're not going to sing it in English. What relevance does this have to New York City in the 21st century? But Masur conducted it with such devotion and deep insight. I mean, that's not a phrase. That's an actuality. He conducted that with deep insight, understood it. I remember: "When all flesh is grass." That was a cleansing moment for a lot of us. Hard to talk about it. And I think that was a good part of Kurt Masur. He was a very deeply intelligent person. [450]

[450] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

Jon Deak's account of the New York Philharmonic's response to the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, emphasizes the desolation that united the members of the Philharmonic with the denizens of New York City and, by extension, all Americans at a time of unparalleled mourning. On September 20, instead of the previously scheduled gala to mark the new season, Masur conducted a memorial benefit broadcast "Live from Lincoln Center" on PBS. Just as Deak was both impressed by Masur's perspicacious decision and moved by the results, it truly seemed that this tragedy brought out the best in both the music director and the entire Philharmonic. As Anthony Tommasini observed in *The New York Times*:

> Kurt Masur's unabashed belief in the power of music to make big statements and foster healing has sometimes invited kidding. No longer. If ever there was a moment when Americans, particularly New Yorkers, needed musical inspiration and healing it is now. On Thursday night Mr. Masur and the New York Philharmonic answered that need with a deeply affecting performance of Brahms's "German Requiem"….That this program fulfilled a craving among New Yorkers was clear from the crowd that gathered outside, despite the drizzling rain, to watch it on an audio-video relay screen in Lincoln Center plaza.[451]

In *Newsday*, Justin Davidson similarly noted the importance of the New York Philharmonic's performance at that specific moment in time:

> …for a beautiful hour Thursday night, Avery Fisher Hall became a haven of concentration….[The] New York Philharmonic offered a benefit performance of Brahms' "Ein Deutsches Requiem" as a balm, and it was reverently accepted….In this time, I have, without intending to, deprived myself of music, and I do not think I am alone. Radios are tuned to talk and news…and the constant, global clang of tunes that fill the air in New York City has been attenuated. So the Philharmonic's return to the stage after a period of quiet echoed an earlier day, when concerts were rare and more momentous, and music was a live art.[452]

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[451] Anthony Tommasini, "Brahms and Masur Touch the Heart of the Matter," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2001.

[452] Justin Davidson, "Philharmonic Benefits Its Audience, Too," *Newsday*, September 22, 2001.

Lawrence Kramer goes further, drawing upon the Philharmonic's efforts to substantiate his theses regarding *Why Classical Music Still Matters*:

> One proof that this project is not merely quixotic came amid the shock and horror following the events of September 11, 2001. For many people trying to come to terms with the cataclysm, classical music provided a perhaps unexpected, perhaps momentary, but nonetheless real resource, consoling in both an emotional and something like a metaphysical sense. And also a communal sense, for this was a matter not just of listening but of listening together….In New York the Philharmonic gave a benefit concert featuring Brahms's *German Requiem*….Such music proliferated around the country.[453]

Having already begun to break down the barriers often present between institutions and individuals, in October and November, the Philharmonic offered a series of ten lunchtime chamber music concerts in different locations near the site of the World Trade Center. Cellist Qiang Tu remembers:

> After the tragedy of September 11th, the Philharmonic…asked if there are people that want to participate in the chamber music, to do something for lower Manhattan and the people there: workers, tenants. And I did. I wanted to do it. It was not easy: for the very short amount of time to put all the musicians together and, also, going to the site. But I'm glad I did it. It's *still* tough to talk about it.[454]

This initiative proved equally cathartic for Deak, whose own work, *Colonial Variances*, was performed on November 16, 2001. He felt unusually strong links between the players and the audience, professing: "We were all dazed from that whole experience. It was still so fresh. That's when I became a New Yorker."[455] For a time, the Philharmonic community was able to

[453] Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters*, 16.

[454] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

[455] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

seize upon common emotions to create ties with both a national and local community that may very well, under less fraught conditions, have never paid heed to a Brahms choral work or chamber music.

After September 11th, when the eyes of the world were focused on New York, the Philharmonic found a renewed sense of purpose. Confronted with completely unforeseeable circumstances, Masur reacted swiftly, and oversaw a performance that transcended the ordinary and filled an actual need. For one evening, the Philharmonic members could share their talents with the communities inside the hall, immediately outside the hall, and watching at home on TV throughout the country, all grasping to come to terms with inexplicable events. Over the next two months, members of the orchestra chose to participate in much smaller concerts, attempting, again, to inject a little light into areas perpetually shadowed by sadness. In so doing, these players clearly gained just as much as they gave. By forging ahead, first under Masur's leadership, and then individually, the Philharmonic demonstrated the same kind of resilience shown by New Yorkers, and the nation as a whole, to move on from tragedy. Though the bonds that had so fleetingly been forged under duress faded accordingly, the Philharmonic community had undeniably proved that it was possible to reach a vast community of listeners. Indeed, the New York Philharmonic did manage to garner similar worldwide attention, over six years later, for a politically oriented venture.

North Korea

> Adding a cultural wrinkle to the diplomatic engagement between the United States and North Korea, the New York Philharmonic plans to visit Pyong-yang, the North Korean capital, in February, taking the legacy of Beethoven, Bach and Bernstein to one of the world's most isolated nations. The trip, at the invitation of North Korea, will be the first

> significant cultural visit by Americans to that country….State Department officials said the orchestra's invitation…and its acceptance represented a potential opening in that Communist nation's relationship with the outside world, and a softening of its unrelenting anti-United States propaganda.
>
> The Philharmonic's trip, which has generated some controversy among orchestra musicians and commentators, will follow a venerable line of groundbreaking orchestra tours that have played a role in diplomacy, the most famous one, perhaps, taking place in 1973, when the Philadelphia Orchestra traveled to China soon after President Nixon's historic visit and amid what came to be known as Ping-Pong diplomacy. In 1956 the Boston Symphony was the first major American orchestra to travel to the Soviet Union. The New York Philharmonic, under Leonard Bernstein, went three years later.[456]

Wakin's announcement of the Philharmonic's plans in *The New York Times* on December 10, 2007, set off a deluge of news coverage, meticulously chronicling all further details leading up to the orchestra's concert in North Korea on February 26, 2008. The natural inclination to continually associate this occasion with the 1959 journey to the Soviet Union may have overstated the importance of any possible outcomes from one individual concert by a symphony orchestra. Yet, for the Philharmonic, all that really mattered was that attention was being paid. Even without a Leonard Bernstein, people throughout the country, and the world, were reading articles and watching features about an orchestra they likely had never heard or seen perform. Furthermore, they were actively debating the propriety of travelling to a hostile, oppressive nation, and speculating about messages that could or should be sent by programming specific works. If, after September 11th, the Philharmonic community became an unexpected symbolic focal point, offering at least a modicum of solace, this 2008 trip to North Korea thrust the Philharmonic back into this rare spotlight, imbuing the orchestra with heightened relevance.

[456] Daniel J. Wakin, "Philharmonic Agrees to Play in North Korea," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2007.

Since Drucker had played in the Soviet Union nearly fifty years earlier, he is able to offer a broad view of this North Korean performance that marked one of the last highlights of his Philharmonic career:

> It came at the end of an Asian tour, after we had been in China. It was a little bit new to go to a place like that. It was like going from one side of the moon to the other, from the light to the dark side. It was a whirlwind visit, but…some of us went to the conservatory to hear young people play. We played a dress rehearsal in the morning one day for a full audience and then at night for a different audience, a formal audience, the performance that was seen everywhere. And the international press was there. There was an enormous amount of interest in the press that accompanied us on that trip. Christiane Amanpour was there and a lot of people that were prominent….[457]

> Everything ran very smoothly. The arrangements that they made for us were fine. They hosted two major receptions, and we saw a folkloric performance with folk instruments, with dancing, with costumes—just an incredible acrobatic-type performance with great precision and agility. And I would say that everything just worked the way they said it would. It was a quick visit, but I think whoever heard the concert enjoyed it. You could sense that they enjoyed it, especially when we played a folk song that was revered in both Koreas. I felt it made a good impression for us. It was the thing to do. We were invited by them and it brought a side of the West that probably should be shown. With the problems that exist in that part of the world, it's always good when you can see something positive.[458]

From Drucker's recollections, it becomes clear that the Philharmonic was affected by both the amount of attention the members were suddenly receiving and also by a heightened responsibility to represent not only their own community, but the American community as well. For the concert that was shown as part of the "Great Performances" series on PBS in the United States, Music Director Lorin Maazel conducted the national anthems of both countries, Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, and the Prelude to Act II of Wagner's

[457] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

[458] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, March 27, 2009.

Lohengrin. After watching the performance streamed live online, on February 27, Tommasini opined in *The New York Times*:

> In negotiating with the North Korean government for this 48-hour stop on its Asian tour, the New York Philharmonic and its music director, Lorin Maazel, insisted that the concert in Pyong-yang be broadcast within the country and beyond….For music lovers in the New York area who have grown familiar with the Philharmonic players, it was affecting to see them take their places onstage….as they assumed their roles as cultural ambassadors to this isolated country where the news media are strenuously controlled. Extremes of political opinion have been expressed about the Philharmonic's decision to accept this invitation….
>
> Still, the concert was historic. And the image of a major American orchestra as a sleek machine under the control of an imposing conductor was nicely countered by the second encore: the overture to Bernstein's "Candide," which…was played by the musicians without a conductor as a tribute to its beloved composer. After the final encore, an arrangement of a wistful Korean folk song, "Arirang," the audience stood, cheered and even waved farewell to the musicians. Many of the players visibly choked up, and waved back. It's a start.[459]

Both Drucker and Tommasini imply that the Philharmonic brought more than Bernstein's music with them to North Korea. They brought his spirit as well, displaying his desire to educate by participating in as many outreach opportunities as possible within very brief time constraints, and drawing from his legacy of utilizing music as a means to reach new audiences. Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow, who joined three of his colleagues and four North Korean musicians to perform Mendelssohn's Octet, reaffirms the Philharmonic's commitment to Bernstein's ideals:

> I think we're musical ambassadors at the New York Philharmonic….We tried our bit in North Korea. I don't know how much good it did, but it opened it up a bit. Music always speaks better than politics. It speaks that

[459] Anthony Tommasini, "Catching a Streamed-In Philharmonic Live From North Korea," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2008.

> language that everybody seems to understand. There's no baggage there. There's just art, and art can be appreciated by everybody. So we do our best to be cultural musical ambassadors throughout the world. As a matter of fact, when we go on tour, they schedule these chamber concerts made up of people from the Philharmonic at embassies, and very often we'll play at the American embassy in Japan or in Europe, and there'll be people from all over the world that help try to bring everybody together and to speak a common language.[460]

As concertmaster, Dicterow frequently serves as spokesperson for the entire Philharmonic, and he views the North Korean excursion as one example of continuing efforts to promote goodwill. For Tu, who had the distinction of becoming the first Chinese-born musician to join the orchestra in 1995, this trip held greater personal significance, linking his past and his present as an American citizen:

> North Korea is something very special, I think, for all of us, the Philharmonic musicians. It reminded me of a lot of things about the Cultural Revolution. In 1979, I think, the Chinese top leader went to Pyong-yang to have a state visit there….When we went there in 2008, everything looked just the same as 1979. But, meanwhile, not only China, but the whole world kept changing.
>
> I think I was one of the people in the orchestra supporting this trip to North Korea because I think we American people do care about North Koreans. No matter how we say it, it's better to do something: Be there. Show that we do care. And, also, my generation, we grew up with North Korea's culture. During the Cultural Revolution…there was basically no music, no film, basically no entertainment. The best of music, best of films, was North Korean….And suddenly we're in North Korea….What I heard were the tunes from the 1970s, what I heard when I was in childhood….It's a very mixed feeling. It's somewhat very tough for me to go through everything again. The good thing was…they had lots of master classes, and I did one of them. I was very happy I could do something.[461]

[460] Glenn Dicterow, interview by author, March 3, 2010.

[461] Qiang Tu, interview by author, March 6, 2013.

Though there was certainly no breakthrough in the political relationship between North Korea and the United States, it was obviously important to the players to make that effort when the opportunity arose. In turn, the Philharmonic community was able, once again, albeit temporarily, to reconnect with a larger community at home.

Just as Masur is most remembered, and held in high esteem, as the sage presence presiding over one especially somber performance of the Brahms *German Requiem*, the most indelible image from Maazel's tenure as music director is the widely circulated photograph of the New York Philharmonic arriving in North Korea. In both 2001 and 2008, the Philharmonic achieved the kind of prominence all orchestras covet but few ever receive. In both instances, the players were creatively galvanized by a sense of greater importance, but it would have been unreasonable to expect such disproportionate levels of attention to linger for long. The legitimate question, then, was whether any music director could, as really only Bernstein had, foster some kind of more lasting connections between the Philharmonic community and the community of potential audience members, both local and at large. That determination would be left for Maazel's successor, in the post-Drucker era.

Alan Gilbert: A Music Director from the Community

> The New York Philharmonic reached into its family tree and plucked Alan Gilbert, the 40-year-old son of two Philharmonic musicians, as its next music director, making him the first native New Yorker in the position and a rare American in the job….Gilbert's mother, Yoko Takebe, is a violinist, and his father, Michael Gilbert, also a violinist, retired in 2001….While pushing the limit for a baseball player, 42 will be a tender age for the music director of one of the world's major orchestras, especially the Philharmonic, where many musicians and concertgoers expect a seasoned maestro of major stature to occupy the podium….[The] Philharmonic has turned to conductors in their early 40s before, like Zubin Mehta and Leonard Bernstein….Philharmonic officials presented the decision as a

> generational change….[Lorin] Maazel…is 77, and Kurt Masur, his predecessor, was 74 when he left….[462]

The selection of Alan Gilbert as music director of the New York Philharmonic, as reported by Wakin in *The New York Times* on July 18, 2007, was greeted with near universal critical acclaim. Writing in the same pages the next day, Tommasini uncharacteristically exhorted: "Let me begin with some sober critical comments on the appointment of Alan Gilbert….Hooray! At last! Or to quote the title of a classic song from an immortal American musical by a legendary Philharmonic conductor, 'Cool.'"[463] On March 3, 2008, in "Taking Over the Family Business," in *New York*, Justin Davidson noted:

> When the New York Philharmonic announced that this hardworking, soft-spoken, 41-year-old maestro would become music director in the fall of 2009, the public responded with a thundering *Alan who?*…Nevertheless, Gilbert is primed to become a luminary of the city's cultural life—not just because he'll be the first native New Yorker, the first Asian-American, and one of the youngest people to direct the 166-year-old orchestra, but because he could lead a quiet revolution, sweeping away the pieties and irresolution that have clung to the orchestra for decades. It's been a long time since the New York Philharmonic has lived up to its hometown's reputation for incubating a bit of insanity.[464]

Indeed, Gilbert, the music director of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra from 2000 to 2008, was neither a household name nor an instantly recognizable face. He was, however, practically a member of the New York Philharmonic community, and when he made his debut with the ensemble in October 2001, it was as if one of their own had been elevated to the podium. Drucker recalls:

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[462] Daniel J. Wakin, "For Its Next Music Director, the Philharmonic Turns to Family," *The New York Times*, July 18, 2007.

[463] Anthony Tommasini, "Philharmonic Opts for Generation Next," *The New York Times*, July 19, 2007.

[464] Justin Davidson, "Taking Over the Family Business," *New York*, March 3, 2008, 44.

> I knew Alan Gilbert a long time, actually, because his parents were my colleagues, both who were violinists. So I knew him when he was still a student. He's a very bright young man and obviously well gifted. When he came as a guest, everybody pretty much knew him, and they knew his parents, and they were very proud of the fact that he got a chance to come and stand in front of the orchestra….He was getting very well known in Scandinavia and other places, and he was a person that was learning at that time and expanding.[465]

The New York Philharmonic, where his father had played for 31 years, his mother remained a member of the first violin section, his cousin, Miki Takebe, served as director of operations, and his sister, Jennifer, had appeared as a substitute violinist, had always been a second home for Gilbert. By the time his appointment as music director was announced, he had led the orchestra 31 times, and in 2009, he would assume leadership of this ensemble he knew so well and vice versa. Violist Kenneth Mirkin, who joined the Philharmonic in 1982, reminisces:

> Alan is someone that many of us have known since he was a kid….Alan grew up in the orchestra, with his parents playing here, so those of us who have been around long enough have just grown really fond of him, and seen him growing all these years. I remember when he first told me that he was taking up conducting. I knew him as a violin student, and he played some viola. I asked him what he was up to and he said that he's been taking up conducting, and I remember thinking, "Yeah, right kid, you think you're going to be a conductor." Because I know how hard it is to make a life as a conductor. And I always think back to that moment because I think, "Well, all right, now he's the boss."
>
> But it's really nice to have someone who is actually growing in their career. We've had a tendency to pick very safe choices, like older music directors who are well-established, as opposed to like in L.A., where they've *really* taken chances on people. They appointed Zubin when he was in his 20s and then, after that, Essa-Pekka [Salonen]. I think he was in his 20s. And now Dudamel….I mean, they've got these incredible conductors, and they just got them when they were in their early stages. The Philharmonic has traditionally played it *a lot* safer. So it was good that we finally took a chance on a younger conductor.[466]

[465] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, April 6, 2011.

[466] Kenneth Mirkin, interview by author, April 27, 2011.

Mirkin suggests that, with Gilbert at the helm, the air was rife with optimism for an exciting future for the Philharmonic. Nearly half a century after Bernstein had blazingly crafted a path as a music director unlike any other, Gilbert was another young American, who had already demonstrated an interest in new music and a refreshing approachability, continuing to hone his skills as a violinist by performing in chamber music concerts with members of his orchestra in Sweden. While Bernstein had grown to become a beloved New York figure, Gilbert was actually born and raised in the city. Furthermore, he was half-Japanese, and, therefore, very much resembled a growing contingent of the 21st-century Philharmonic. If he could harness even a fraction of Bernstein's flair for outreach, perhaps he could help to establish stronger ties between his own New York Philharmonic community and the outside community in his hometown. In any case, as Mirkin points out, after 18 years of leadership by eminent maestros capping off careers with yet another distinguished position, the Philharmonic was at the very least making a promising statement by placing so much trust in a much younger and completely different kind of conductor. Drucker, a true Bernstein disciple, similarly endorsed the music director designate who was set to lead the orchestra after his retirement:

> Alan Gilbert is extremely talented. He's gotten a good amount of experience. He's very inquisitive. His repertoire is very, very wide. I think he's interested in new things, which is a must, and I feel that he's got the energy and the newness to grow into a major force in New York. He's a man of personality and dignity. He's a modest man, and one that one is drawn to. You like him upon meeting him. I feel that he's interested in doing something fine, and I think he's got the ability to do it. I have great expectations of a tremendous career for him….He's certainly worthy of that post. There's no question about it. He's a serious person and he's somebody that knows what he's doing up on that podium.[467]

[467] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

The New York Philharmonic Legacy

> Eighty-year-old Stanley Drucker, who retires next month as principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic after a record-setting 60-year tenure, is part of an international orchestral elite of "star" section leaders—players who flawlessly execute solo passages in symphonic scores and shine in the concerto spotlight as well….His recordings of concertos by Aaron Copland and John Corigliano with the Philharmonic won him Grammy nominations. And he is a living link to such conducting giants as Bruno Walter, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Leonard Bernstein, Leopold Stokowski and Charles Munch, who ascended the Philharmonic's podium in leadership roles or as guest maestros.[468]

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* on May 26, 2009, Barbara Jepson raises the notion of a New York Philharmonic legacy, where Drucker's presence connects the past, present, and, in the forthcoming Gilbert era, future Philharmonic communities. For all the changes Drucker witnessed in six decades, and for all he brought to his position as Principal Clarinet, the Philharmonic would continue welcoming new members and adapting to new audiences in a new century long after his final concert. Principal Cello Carter Brey explains:

> When you take on a position like that, you are becoming a cell in a body that, itself, has an indefinite life. As a cell, you have a certain lifespan. So I'm very conscious of the fact that I'm occupying this chair for a finite number of years, and I'm really trying my damnedest to carve out my own identity in it and to do as good a job in it as my predecessors have done, and to leave it as something that some other younger person will want very much to take over when I'm ready to retire or leave the Philharmonic. I'm sure, walking around right now is some kid who's going to be my successor in the position. There's a young hotshot somewhere who we'll all hear about at some point. So it's important to be conscious, I think, of that continuum of tradition.
>
> Something that helps me remember that is the generational spread in the orchestra among 100 people. When I joined the orchestra, it was a privilege to get to know and to play with someone like Stanley Drucker, who had been in the orchestra since 1948, way before I was born….In a

[468] Barbara Jepson, "He's Performed With Them All," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 26, 2009.

> sense, I feel that we had this overlap, and those of us who are of a younger generation have had the ball passed to us and it's our responsibility to take very good care of the institution….and to make sure that it moves ahead with its reputation held high and burnished as much as it was by previous generations…. It's a very long-lived organism.[469]

Though the Philharmonic Drucker joined in 1948 scarcely resembled the one he left in 2009, his original colleagues undoubtedly would have agreed with Brey's association of the New York Philharmonic legacy with both pride and perpetuating standards. Over sixty years, the orchestra had achieved gender parity, witnessed an influx of Asian musicians and, dispiritingly, continued to display a near complete absence of African-American and Latino individuals. By 2009, the members of the Philharmonic had long ceased marveling at weekly paychecks and had become resigned to resurfacing complaints about Avery Fisher Hall. Under a succession of music directors, the players adjusted to disparate personalities and varying proportions of new and old repertoire. Yet, throughout Drucker's entire career, the community had always placed a premium on the pursuit of excellence, privileging the New York Philharmonic as a whole far greater than the sum of its individual members and leaders.

Even though bassist Orin O'Brien's own stature as a role model for future generations of Philharmonic women is secure, when she reflects back over her career since 1966, she still marvels at the orchestra's adaptability:

> I'm thinking of quartets. When one member leaves and then someone new comes in, they have to adjust to each other and, on a larger scale, that's an orchestra too. And then a new music director comes in: There's a whole other adjustment taking place because the orchestra's used to responding a certain way, and then this new conductor wants things the opposite. That's difficult for a while, but then that adjusts, and then the next person comes in. But, actually, we have a lot of change. Every

[469] Carter Brey, interview by author, April 13, 2011.

> couple of weeks we have a new conductor….That's one of the thrills of orchestra playing.[470]

Having joined the Philharmonic over thirty years after O'Brien attracted so much media attention, Principal Associate Concertmaster Sheryl Staples augments O'Brien's conception of the orchestra's legacy, musing:

> Orchestras are very, very different in the way they play. It's a living, breathing body, the orchestra, and it's ever-evolving. Our approach to different kinds of music, different genres, different repertoire—There are certain things which remain very stable, certainly, such as the standard, just the high level which we always strive to maintain. But subtle differences in the types of sound that we're looking to produce, articulation, different colors….Conductors each have their own personalities and those personalities do influence the way the orchestra plays, and that has been fascinating for me to be a part of that.[471]

Clearly, the New York Philharmonic tradition that connects veteran members like O'Brien and Drucker with younger musicians like Brey and Staples would ease the transitions that would occur in 2009, with the arrival of Gilbert and the absence of such familiar faces as Drucker and Deak. Principal Viola Cynthia Phelps emphasizes the unity of the Philharmonic that had weathered other such changing of the guards in the past and would likely be poised to do so indefinitely:

> The nature of the orchestra itself, of playing with 100 people, that's going to be really strong no matter who's up there. Conductors come, conductors go, and the integrity really lies in how we respond to one another….I think that we form a base group that is there….a very, very big chamber group.[472]

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[470] Orin O'Brien, interview by author, March 9, 2010.

[471] Sheryl Staples, interview by author, April 13, 2010.

[472] Cynthia Phelps, interview by author, January 30, 2013.

Stanley Drucker's tenure at the New York Philharmonic, which began on the stage of Carnegie Hall with Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting a rehearsal in October 1948, officially ended with a concert conducted by Gilbert as part of the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado on July 31, 2009. He has provided the thread weaving together my Philharmonic community quilt, and those strands will remain, just as he will forever be part of the New York Philharmonic legacy. For sixty years, Drucker was a vital presence within the orchestra, but, as he moved on to the next phase of his career as a musician, he was able to proffer his final assessment of the community:

> It's a totally different atmosphere, different chemistry, different people. When I joined, it was a men's club of many different European backgrounds. And today it's more unified and it doesn't have the feeling of so many different peoples. They may be from different places today, but everybody is the same….[473]

> I would say, as far as the workload, or work ethic, in the modern era, most of the players, the younger players especially, want to rehearse to the limit. They don't want it shortened in any way….Of course, eras are different. I sort of have a leg in each era. In the old times, what the repertoire consisted of was pretty well known pieces for everybody. So a lot of times, one didn't have to work extra-long to prepare a Schumann symphony because it was in their blood. They could play it without the music. But with the repertoire becoming so wide and complex, you have works that really need a lot of work. It's changed the workload and work ethic….[474]

> I'd say the players of the New York Philharmonic, player for player, are better players of their instrument than in my early days. I find that the quality of individual playing has gone up and up and up. Of course, there were great players in the past, but they weren't all of them at that level. Now the percentage is much higher of the really fine players, and the great players are still as few as there ever were, but, as a group, the New York Philharmonic is on very solid ground. The quality of the players is as good as anywhere in the world and better than most places. I'd say their future is very rosy because of that. The atmosphere of being in that group

[473] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[474] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, February 23, 2011.

> on that stage does something to people. It puts a certain pride, a certain kind of belonging, a certain kind of an energy into those people, even if some of them don't show it outwardly. I think they're all affected by that. So I think that they're on a great level. They're on a great path.[475]

The 21st Century Philharmonic Community Quilt

When Deak left his position as Associate Principal Bass in 2009, his 40-year relationship with the orchestra did not end, but rather evolved, as he assumed the role of Young Composer Advocate of the New York Philharmonic. He, for one, strongly believes in the importance of bolstering the Philharmonic's relevance in the 21st century, stating:

> I am so convinced of the rightness that this orchestra belongs to the people of the city of New York, and whatever surrounding areas, and also to the people of the world. So we have to go around. In order for us not to lose that, we have to constantly go out to the community, play in the community, bring people in to us, and, my bailiwick, we have to foment a new repertoire from the children of New York City….The symphony orchestra is *the* most magnificent creation that humanity has ever put together….So the Philharmonic has to continue.[476]

From the very outset, this oral history of the New York Philharmonic community was undertaken with Deak's very premise in mind: "The Philharmonic has to continue." It has always been my fervent wish that, through this inside examination of sixty years at the Philharmonic, readers would come to relate to the orchestra as a collection of fascinating individuals. That these musicians have willingly shared such varying perspectives offers hope that the orchestra as a whole will, as Deak urges, find future opportunities to demonstrate a renewed sense of purpose and become a greater presence, performing for a larger, and more

[475] Stanley Drucker, interview by author, June 7, 2011.

[476] Jon Deak, interview by author, June 22, 2011.

involved, audience. I have experienced, firsthand, the generosity and talents of the New York Philharmonic community, and believe the creativity and energy is already there. The individuals I have spoken to seem invigorated by the arrival of Gilbert and, though it is far too soon to offer any pronouncements about the "Gilbert era," it is refreshing to hear such excitement from professional orchestral musicians.

By all accounts, it appears that the Philharmonic management has made a wise decision, carefully choosing a music director willing to invest in a vision for the orchestra. Perhaps, then, what is most needed are more chances for the actual members of the Philharmonic to literally connect with audiences. The Very Young People's Concerts allow these musicians to channel their abilities into directly reaching one subsection of the outside community. The chamber music concerts that were organized after September 11, 2001, provided another outlet for players to come into close contact with residents of New York City. When Drucker and some of his other colleagues were interviewed by CNN about North Korea in 2008, they were able to become identifiable faces, rather than part of a sea of black-and-white up on a stage. This orchestra that has risen to the occasion in the past can discern new ways to reach new communities by tapping the full potential of its own community. If my study can help focus any attention on the members of the New York Philharmonic, and remove some patina of remoteness or monolithic institutionalism, I will consider the endeavor a success.

As of this writing, Alan Gilbert's contract as music director runs through the 2016-17 season. Cellist Evangeline Benedetti retired in 2011, and in 2014, the Philharmonic witnessed two significant retirements: Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow and violinist Yoko Takebe, who certainly never could have imagined, when she was hired by Zubin Mehta in 1979, that she would leave the orchestra in the hands of her son. In the future, the Philharmonic community

quilt will continue to add vibrant new patches while also continually maintaining the somewhat fading, older ones. It will be left to the newer members of the orchestra, eventually guided by Gilbert's successor, to decide just what kind of community it will be and how it will relate with surrounding communities.

Personal Interviews

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William Bolcom. April 15, 2013. New York, NY.

Carter Brey. April 13, 2011. New York, NY.

John Corigliano. October 27, 2006. New Orleans, LA.

Jon Deak. June 22, 2011. New York, NY.

Glenn Dicterow. March 3, 2010. New York, NY.

Stanley Drucker. November 20, 2004. Massapequa, NY.

Stanley Drucker. March 27, 2009. Massapequa, NY.

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Cynthia Phelps. January 30, 2013. New York, NY.

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