



Grantmakers in the Arts
2004 Conference

DANCING WITH DIFFERENT PARTNERS

Proceedings from the Conference

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INNOVATIONS ON STAGE

More and more orchestras are experimenting with new concert formats and enhancements that make classical music relevant to a wider audience. This session will focus on program innovations in the orchestra field and the critical role of funders in stimulating and reinforcing innovation. Alan Brown, who directed the Classical Music Consumer Segmentation Study for Knight Foundation, will open the session with a summary of consumer trends affecting demand for classical concerts. Participants will share examples of new concert formats and concert enhancements, including contextual programming, dramatization of music, visual enhancements and interpretative aids. The second half of the session will allow for participant discussion and interaction with panelists. Do these new concert enhancements add up to an important shift in programming direction? Should innovation be a priority for orchestras and their funders? How can funders most effectively sew the seeds of innovation?

Session Organizer: Liz Sklaroff, *program officer,*
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Presented by: Alan Brown, *principal, Alan S. Brown & Associates*
Aaron Dworkin, *president, Sphinx Organization*
Howard Herring, *president and CEO,*
New World Symphony and
Murry Sidlin, *conductor*

October 19, 2004, 10:00 a.m.

BROWN: Before we get started, let me tell you about some of the innovations I've been seeing. For instance, an orchestra commissioned artists to put together a visual tableau on a huge screen above the stage using cutting-edge technology. I hear more and more of this going on. For example, *The Lord of the Rings* symphony was touring this year, and there was an element that included projections that were connected to the program.

Imbedded interpretation. I don't mean to make a mountain out of a mole hill here, but from what I can tell talking to orchestra folks, there's a lot more introducing going on, reading, explaining a little bit about the piece and even how a couple of pieces came together on the same program so the audience can understand that.

Just this summer the musicians from the Philadelphia Orchestra were very reluctant to get going, but as they did it and they got positive feedback from the audience they began thinking that this is something that they should do more often.

There's also the Concert Companion project, which is just another way of delivering commentary about the concert through a wireless handheld device.

I'd like to stop there with the observation that all of this might be adding up to a shift in the thinking about programs and adding more value, more interesting visual effects and theatric elements in order to attract a new audience. I'd like to just stop there and ask Murry if he wouldn't pick up.

SIDLIN: Before I get to the more formal side of my conversation this morning, Alan, I'd like to comment on your opening statement of what's driving innovation. I think what's driving innovation is a great passion for music and a lot of empty seats.

When I look at something like this, I like to see whether it is contextual or if perhaps we have added events unrelated, whether or not there's a relationship between the presentation and the music.

This is such a casual group, forgive my formality, but I did jot some ideas down that I wanted to share with you.

About a century or so ago during the continuing inward flow of that grand first wave of immigrants to America, there was established in the home environment a musical presence which

required participation of all members of the family.

Families that didn't have enough food somehow had a piano; some had a violin or cello, but all had money for lessons. They sang, they played, and that was the entertainment. How many of us can recall the social setting of the first generation of those musical families?

There were limitations. No home had a symphony orchestra or an opera company. Rare homes had access to a string quartet. But those were not the common practice households. No phonographs, no victrolas, as they were called, even my spell-check never heard of a victrola. No films of music making, no radio broadcasts of the Met, NBC Symphony or Philharmonic. In fact, no radio, so if you wanted music you made it in the house.

For the symphony orchestra, opera companies, string quartets, the greatest soloists in recital, ballet, drama, you had to travel to the center of town and purchase expensive tickets, something that most families would do on rare occasions or special events. The idea that the local symphony orchestra played every week, two or three performances every week, was way off in the future.

When you went to the orchestra, what did you find? Mostly ensembles playing well, or very well, or brilliantly. It was a formal affair, even the rehearsals were formal, with the musicians wearing coats and ties and the conductor dressed in a suit and tie.

At the turn of the century in Boston, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Chicago, and numerous other cities, the rehearsals were often held in German. What did they play? An amazing amount of contemporary music in places like New Haven, Connecticut.

An orchestra was organized in 1893 by Horatio Parker, a composer who led Yale's music department. The orchestra was formed to play the newest of the new compositions and explore the diversity of unique musical languages being heard throughout Europe, such as the first or second performances in America of the Tchaikovsky 6th, Mahler's 2nd, Dvorak's "New World," Debussy's "Afternoon of a Faun," Verdi's "Falstaff," Strauss's "Til Eulenspiegel," Rachmaninoff's "Isle of the Dead." All composed in 1893.

That orchestra is still alive and struggling, and, unfortunately, their commitment to 1893 still goes on.



Fast forward. Today one may not go anywhere near the concert hall to experience musical events. As we know, with videos, DVDs, and quality sound systems so easy to purchase inexpensively, one can have a private, selective iPod of a concert hall within one's own car or while running, walking, or waiting for a bus. One can be anywhere and hear in private and not experience the financial drain and stress that are often associated with the concert hall or going out.

This is old news, of course, but it hasn't changed much since it was real news, and that makes it news again. Is it the music that's at fault? If it were, the electronic musical world would not be forever reinventing itself to better and affordable and highly imaginative materials.

Anyone who has a kid of seventeen or under can have anything they need programmed, and you only need their cellphone to reach them whenever you press the wrong mode and the machine freezes on you out of disgust for your age and ignorance. Which explains something about seventeen-year olds' reaction to us when we walk into the room.

Orchestras and the concert halls in general are in great difficulty. The top forty orchestras all seem to be railing against the quicksand of consuming expenses versus attendance and contributions. Bailouts are temporary, and long-term solutions now use the word "cut" up front as a last resort. Cut the season. Cut the size of the orchestra. Cut the office staff. Find cheaper office space. Freeze or rollback all salaries. Cut expensive guest artists. Cut projects. Cut education programs which operate at losses. Cut PR. Cut, cut, cut. Cut the soul of the organization.

And they do that. It's what's needed. Audiences are down, even for many of our most august ensembles. The aura of fear and desperation hovers over the entire organization and, indeed, the entire professional world of classical music. With the constant encroaching and seemingly consuming darkness, I've never been more optimistic. I emphasize that last line.

I've never been more convinced that we can succeed, that the audience is there, that the support money is there, that our future can be secure. So now you're whispering to each other, to paraphrase *When Harry Met Sally*, "I'll have whatever he's having."

All we have to do is put back into the concert hall that which cannot be gotten at home. It's as simple as that.

We have played to the fears and suspicions that classical music was soft, slow, boring, elite, and unlinked to social values. We, the performers are to blame for all we built because the ills all stem from public alienation. We've created the barbed-wire to keep out the riffraff. We succeeded and when we needed them they told us to get lost. And that's where we find ourselves now.

Michael Kaiser, president of the Kennedy Center said that while most arts institutions constantly point to 9/11 as the fault for not being able to raise the resources needed just to maintain the basic operations, he found that he's never raised more money in his life than he did immediately after 9/11. We continually sense that.

Is it that no one can raise money but Michael? He's smarter than many, but he's tapped into one major fact, that in time of great national despondency – the Depression, World War II, 9/11 – somehow, and deeply inside some area of our spurious souls we need to know that there has been a genius at work on our behalf.

On 9/11 we witnessed the horror and evil of the worst of mankind. Michael said to his constituency, "Help me keep on stage the best of mankind." They responded. "Why?" Because they saw this fight! That we needed to know that the best of our human legacy will be sustained and continue to reflect, explore and touch us with a reality that countered the evil reality. We had reason, license and will to continue. Here's my share to put it up on stage and prove it.

I conducted the New Year's Eve concert that year at the Kennedy Center with the National Symphony in the federal building just three months after the attack at the Pentagon, visible from the Kennedy Center. We sold the concert out in four days after the Kennedy Center put the tickets up for sale.

If you think this tale is an anomaly, then may I please tell you about a great passion of mine, the prisoners of terrorism, whose drama and need for the arts goes far beyond our own. There was, as you know, a concentration camp during World War II between 1941 and 1945 located approximately forty to fifty miles northeast of Prague. A choir goes into a dark, dank basement every night to learn the Verdi "Requiem" by rote. Sixteen performances were given. In those four years, 450 lecturers gave 2,000 lectures, operas, choral music, chamber music, a swing band, four composers writing, piano recitals, cabarets, Shakespeare, because these people could not stop. The art and the science saved their ravaged bodies from quick deterioration. Little food,



hardly any nutrition, always sick, always filthy, but they sang.

I want to say about this story, in connection to the prisoners of terrorism who learned the Verdi "Requiem" and performed it sixteen times, the story that went fairly well unnoticed for many, many years.

When I found out about it and created the concert drama that used some authentic film from the camp, *Reader's Digest* got ahold of the story, and they did a story in their April 2003 issue of what I put together and were able to illuminate for all who wanted to see it and hear it and read it.

This magazine has the constituency of some 40 million in America. The story was also in their editions of Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Sweden, Hong Kong, and South Africa. The editors of *Reader's Digest* speculate that a hundred million people saw the story. A hundred million people read about the Verdi "Requiem." It's very hard for me to take seriously the issue that there is no audience for the stories of music and for the sounds of music, and for the capability that music has to offer us a clear sense of human dignity.

Here is the terrorism lesson which is the beacon for us here and now. Those prisoners discovered desperate listening. They experienced that music touches us in deep emotional, physical and psychological ways, to inspire, to elevate under the torturous and hideous environment of the concentration camp. They sang and played and listened desperately, as one of them said, "With the same effect of running after a piece of bread that someone in front of you has dropped." They listened desperately.

Removed from the distractions of comfort, such as food, health, safety, protection, hygiene, warmth, family, certainty of family, well-being, they were magnetically pulled, desperately drawn to music in ways we will never understand. The music meant temporary comfort, short-term return to beauty and wonderment from this unspeakable horror, not only what they experienced but what they saw.

This is what is compelling about music, and this is what is missing in our own concert halls, within our own half-hearted performances, staid presentations and formats, resulting in audiences who choose or not, to enter the core of the music, the truth, the effect, of not entertainment, but necessity.

Do we have to be as desperate as they to enter music? Of course not. But greater gravitation to music is possible, stronger and deeper, than the

average, common personal experience for us. For us going to the concert hall is an option. For them it was critical, sometimes life and death. Surely there's something in between.

We are missing the compelling concert hall, which will attract full houses and transport people through the experience. How do we create that compelling concert hall? How do we train desperate listeners?

First of all, assume the quality is assured, because in America it certainly is in most places. The answer for me, my experiences with audiences, is context, variety, technology, and a thorough relationship between the stage and audience. We take them. We bring them. We don't just send them.

Context. Concerts which explore the history, culture, philosophy, social realism or the personalities which formed the music, caused the music to happen. It must seem like a spontaneous event.

Variety. Which means in addition to the music maker, and when appropriate, not when inappropriate, video references, actors, dance, even audience participation during or prior or after, but surrounding the performance. But only when appropriate.

Technology is available. Technology is an expectation in addition to and not instead of the music. No apology for the music, but opening the core and allowing entry. Explore the musical elements, and then validate the imagination of the listener.

Give me a few more minutes to explore with you the typical season of a major original symphony orchestra, the current state of concert series, and a community, that does fourteen to sixteen pairs or triples or single concerts a year.

Individual concerts throughout the season usually organize the basis of the programmatic organization. There's an overture, followed by a concerto. Of course there are variations on that, but that's the general status of things since the 1880s in American music.

Occasionally there are sojourns into oratorio, maybe a concert opera, maybe a one-composer event, maybe a one-composition event. But these are all standard formats, and it's high time to demolish traditional formats.

Let's divide up the fourteen concerts. Let's keep three of them as the traditional overture/concerto/symphony, spread throughout the year.



For those who only go to three concerts anyway. Let's call the next group of three, anatomy concerts, the anatomy of the Elgar "Enigma Variations," the anatomy of the Beethoven 3rd, the anatomy of the Sibelius 2nd Symphony. An exploration of one work on a program, which is performed after intermission, with nothing other than the wonderful musical sounds that it makes.

In the first half of the concert maybe that's where we get clever and interesting. Maybe that's where the audience can ask us questions about the piece which we can answer musically with the orchestra on stage. Maybe that's where the actors come in. Maybe that's where letters are written. Maybe that's where video is presented. Those are the three anatomy concerts I suggest. You could have three of those going, in depth, one work on each program.

Call the next series the Illuminations Series. I'll give you four titles that I use, "Aaron Copeland's America" "Sigmund Freud and Dreams of Gustav Mahler;" "The Defiant Requiem," which we've talked about; "Russian David, Soviet Goliath: Shostakovich versus Stalin." I could not believe the reaction from as diverse people as Jack Nicholson and Sandra Day O'Connor. They like the same things!

In the Copeland concert, for example, in addition to playing folk material at the piano and showing how it relates to Mexico, in the middle of "Appalachian Spring," we drop the screen while the orchestra is playing and bring Martha Graham into the mix, right there on stage.

In Freud and Mahler, it requires three actors to show the "neuroses" in the music. It requires Freud negotiating and refereeing between Alma and Gustav most of the time.

"Defiant Requiem" requires three actors, a video and the normal choruses to present the Verdi "Requiem."

"Russian David, Soviet Goliath: Shostakovich versus Stalin" is two actors and chamber musicians. The concert requires a string quartet, a solo pianist and solo singer. The whole purpose of this concert is to get to an uninterrupted performance of the 5th Symphony to make the audience better aware why it exists, how it got there and all the other elements of what it's like to be a composer working with a dictator looking over your shoulder for many years.

For the Choral Concert, what about a concert where the chorus presents a baroque work and a cappella work and then a full work with orchestra? What about a couple of concerts where

we get to know the soloists? The way it is today, a soloist comes in, you pay him a lot of money, and a soloist plays approximately twenty to thirty minutes. And that's it.

But what if the soloist was playing three to four works on the same program? Maybe something unaccompanied, maybe something with a small baroque ensemble, maybe a major concerto. We really get to know the soloist in interviews between pieces and dialogue with the conductor.

Maybe we do a concert called "The Unknown Something or Other." If Tchaikovsky could be the box-office draw, but we played the 2nd piano concerto and the master symphony, I think audiences are ready for new experiences with older works of Tchaikovsky.

In virtually all of these concerts, eleven of the fourteen that I mentioned, the event is the celebrity. The emphasis is placed back onto the music. It no longer becomes necessary to have major artists for every concert. The quality is there, the box office in my experience follows, costs go down.

Einstein, as my colleague said last night, said that the definition of lunacy is the repetition of the same thing over and over and over again, expecting a different result!

BROWN: Murry. I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt, but the other panelists need to have a chance to make their comments.

SIDLIN: Absolutely. I have overstayed my visit. I thank you for the time.

BROWN: I'd like to just thank you Murry for such incredibly insightful comments, and cutting to the heart of the innovation when the pieces on stage are fundamentally programmed in a new and different way. I'd like to ask you maybe when we get around to questions, to think about what enabled you to break through with the programming you have done, and perhaps why other music directors aren't able to actually take more risks.

And now Aaron.

DWORKIN: I have some notes here that I'm going to reference, but I wanted to start off by giving you a very quick overview so that you get a sense of the context in which we are expressing and generating innovation in terms of our programming at the Sphinx Organization.

We have four main program areas. The first is artist development, which includes the



Sphinx Competition, a national competition for young black and Latino string players. We also assembled the Sphinx Symphony, which is a professional all black and Latino orchestra that we assemble from around the country.

Then we have a number of scholarship programs, an instrument fund, a national recital series at Borders stores, our Laureate Solo with orchestras around the country. All of that falls under what we call Artist Development.

We also have a preparatory music institute in Detroit, Saturday Preparatory Program. We have a summer program, the Sphinx Performance Academy outside of Boston, partnering with the Walnut Hill School. We have our Classical Connection programs, which are in-school educational programming that we do around the country.

In preparing for this session, I was reading the paragraph I think that you put together, Alan, on innovation and thinking about how it relates to diversity. I always like to have things defined for me, especially if I'm going to talk about them.

So I looked up the definition of innovation, which specifically is the introduction of something new, something that is contrary to established customs. I found that very interesting, because the definition of diversity is to work to achieve what is called a state of difference. In the orchestra field and in classical music, less than three percent of orchestras are black and Latino combined, about one and a half percent each. The numbers on staffing are even lower. Audiences are about the same.

Given this environment, unless orchestras and classical music introduce not just some thing but many things new, we will never, ever achieve a state of difference. I absolutely believe that diversity in the field of classical music is the highest state of innovation, and probably the most critical aspect of innovation that our field needs to incorporate.

One of the questions that Alan posed is for funders. Should you consider innovation a priority? From our perspective, we think it's emphatically, yes. It should be the priority.

What are some of the innovative methods that we use at Sphinx? I'll talk about a couple of aspects of the programming that we do, and how it either has an innovative impact or we're approaching it organizationally in an innovative way.

We have what's called our Professional Development Program, this is part of our Artist

Development. Through this we partner with twenty-six orchestras, the top orchestras around the country, including the New World Symphony.

These orchestras commit to provide a solo performance opportunity for one or two of our top laureates each year, providing that our laureates meet the artistic-merit requirement of the orchestra, which is always our key, and something that Murry referenced that's very important. No matter what we're doing in terms of innovation, the artistic quality must remain the same.

In the partnership with these orchestras, they're able to benefit by obtaining an instant diversity on their stage and for their audiences. Many orchestras use our laureate performances with them to bring in new audiences into their halls.

From our perspective, we're able to achieve the core of our mission, which is increasing those audiences, increasing the diversity around the country and providing the performance opportunity for our laureates.

We also have our scholarship programs, Summer Education Program and Music Assistance Fund. This gets to organizational structure because finances have been an issue. We always look at goals that we're trying to achieve as an organization, and say is it possible to achieve it raising less money, by partnering?

For example, with our Summer Education Program we partner with the top summer music programs, Aspen, Encore, Meadowmount, Interlaken, and they provide full scholarships to all of the Sphinx semifinalists to be able to attend their institutions.

These institutions are desperately trying to identify and recruit qualified minority students. We're trying to find scholarships for our students. So instead of their trying to raise funding to enhance their recruitment and do further outreach, and instead of us trying to raise additional funds to do scholarships, we're able to do it combined through partnership.

With the Music Assistance Fund, we partner with the American Symphony Orchestra League. With that, we've been able to dramatically expand by going directly to colleges and music schools around the country. Now Juilliard, Michigan, Indiana, and other music schools provide these scholarships, and they now total over \$100,000 a year. So really utilizing partnerships to achieve some of these goals.



One other thing I can mention is our educational programming, Classical Connections. One of the things that we hear from a lot of orchestras is that they have difficulty working with schools on a consistent basis, and getting the schools to be responsive.

When we partner with schools nationwide – we do this in multiple states around the country – we avoid school administrations, we go directly to teachers and to principals. It's more staff rote work there, but in the end what you develop are relationships with teachers instead of relationships with the administrations. You can always get the administration's stamp of approval. We find that our school programming is very, very productive and long term.

To give you an idea, at our Honors Concert we bus in over a thousand kids for several months. The concert takes place in early February, we've been turning away schools for several months, because we have partnerships with all of these principals and especially with teachers directly.

This is a key point. Orchestras will go out to these schools with their membership, which makes sense. We go to schools with musicians who are closer in age to the students they're talking to, and who, frankly, look like the students they're talking to. And speak their language.

So that is Innovative Ways, and we think that's one of the reasons why we've been able to be so successful with it.

I want to move on to the flip side, which is another question that Alan posed – what can funders do to sow the seeds of innovation?

First of all, my thoughts on this are that funders are critical. You wield an incredible amount of influence over our field, as I think you know. We believe that not only you can, but that you should, make diversity and innovation a priority. If you don't it is all the more unlikely that our field will. It is arguable that if you do make it a priority, the field will follow that example, and there are examples of that over the past ten years. But if you don't it's very unlikely that our field will as a whole.

In terms of specifics, one of the things that we believe strongly is that funders can help orchestras and other arts organizations to better define to their constituencies why diversity is important. We find that is a key problem in a lot of our partnerships with arts organizations, and especially orchestras.

We believe that you can help orchestras and other arts organizations to better market their programs to diverse audiences. It's as simple as Ford marketing their Taurus. The way they marketed in *Jet* and *Ebony* and *Essence* magazines is going to be a totally different ad than the way it's marketed in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New Yorker*. It's the same car, but they're reaching out to different audiences. For whatever reasons, as a whole, we look at the marketing that orchestras do, and it doesn't look any different when they're trying to reach out to new audiences. They need help here, and that help requires funding.

One of the other things is helping orchestras and other arts organizations develop long-term diversity strategies. All too often what we have seen, and unfortunately what's happened with a lot of organizations similar to Sphinx that just focus on diversity, is that they pop up for a few years and then they're gone. There's a multi-year grant, some things happen, and then the funding goes away and the program goes away.

Long-term strategies are critical in this area. When you look at tenure or audition policies, or other infrastructures currently in place, it can't help but take a long time to achieve diversity in our field. So it is very important. Unfortunately, today there are just a couple of orchestras that have fellowship programs, whereas in the heyday they were very, very prevalent. Even those that exist today are pretty watered-down.

We believe that funders could and should put significant pressure on orchestras and arts organizations to diversify their staff. Here is an area where you aren't confronted with some of the labor issues and other things that make diversity in the membership of the orchestra more difficult. Staffing is easier.

With the one to three percent statistics for the membership in the orchestra, it goes way down when you're talking about staff, especially artistic administrator positions, which are key positions, and the diversity of compositions and guest artists coming in. We strongly believe that innovation cannot take place in an organization unless its own staff is diverse.

Last, but not to be biased in this encouragement, funders do need to support orchestras and other arts organizations in their partnerships with organizations that focus on diversity because they don't have the experience, they don't have the knowledge, they may not have the necessary networks. They need to develop long-term active partnerships with organizations that do.



I will stop there and sum up by reiterating that I believe that diversity and innovation are intricately intertwined in this particular issue. When you look at the fact that our field is behind every other major field in the country, from sports to even other arts like the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in terms of just permitting blacks and Latinos in orchestras, let alone actively engaged in diversity initiatives, we not only need to catch up, but if we're actually going to bring classical music into the modern era and develop it and have it be connected with the communities in which we reside, we have to make diversity and innovation a priority.

BROWN: Thank you very much. Good job.

HERRING: The New World Symphony is beginning its 17th season. We're still young enough to be quite agile but old enough to know that we have a proven concept.

We were founded around the idea that young musicians that lead a life in orchestra need preparation for that life. Our mission is to guide them artistically, but also, and this is in our mission statement, to make them leaders. I'll define that in a moment.

After sixteen years of full seasons, there are now just over 630 alums who are in 167 orchestras or ensembles around the world. Thirty-seven of the 167 are outside the United States and the remainder here. We're in every major orchestra, we're in middling orchestras, we're in the smaller orchestras. We're in orchestras that work ten weeks a year, and orchestras that work fifty-two weeks a year.

We have what I have come to call an experiential curriculum. We've developed a way to move through what looks like on the outside a straightforward orchestral week of activity, two or three concerts a week at the end of the week, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. But in front of that there are all sorts of activities that are not traditional orchestral activities. We live in what I call the fertile middle ground between academic work and professional lives.

Our players learn in terms of preparation for auditions using psychology, and they learned about diversity training. We send them through a very strenuous number of exercises teaching them to speak to the audience. They all go through it, and we want them all to feel at least a little comfortable, and once you're good at it, we want to encourage. Then you give them chances to do that before the public.

We spend a lot of time talking about the internal structures of orchestras. All of us inside the orchestra, development, artistic operations, my own office, the dean's office, we all speak to them formally and informally about what we do and how that makes the New World Symphony work, and how those further parallels will be going forward.

We were built around the idea that we could change the orchestra world. We think that's happening. We have an alumni week coming up this season for between twenty and thirty alums, and we spend a lot of time talking with them about what they discovered and also make some music. It will be quite wonderful.

At this point it's anecdotal reports that we have about the innovation that we encourage and how it has taken form in the larger world. Let me give you a couple of examples.

One of our players had gotten into the Chicago Symphony, a young cellist, who shall remain nameless. In his first season he scoped it out, got to the end of the first season, he was ready to go, ran for the orchestra committee.

Within about six or eight weeks of serving on that orchestra committee he managed to alienate some of the members of the committee. He managed to be a crusader, a missionary, a zealot. It wasn't long before he realized that his job was at stake. So he began to pull back, and at the end of the year he did not run for reelection, and he's now biding his time.

We have a couple of other examples in some of the major orchestras, people who were just too much to handle for the culture of the organization, as they entered those particular orchestras.

We also have some wonderful examples of people who have actually caused orchestras to begin to rethink out of their art and into the world. One of the better examples is Kathy _____ in Los Angeles, as a young player in her middle twenties, entering at a moment when they got a group of people together and started engaging with the community and talking to the audience.

"How many of you would like to do that?" No one said a word. We continued to pull and probe, "This is important because you're going to need to speak with the audience with some kind of dialog." Nobody said a word. Finally Kathy put her hand up and said, "Well, I'm brand new, but I'll do it." So she learned how to do it.

That's the kind of encouragement that's provided for them. Without playing well, you've got to



make it through the audition process. They could play at the very highest levels, but you have to be ready for all the elements there.

What we do in terms of day-to-day at the orchestra that would define us is that our fellows talk to board members. We have them do it at board meetings, we have them do it before and after concerts.

We accost the board, a board that's not completely populated with music lovers and people who in the beginning didn't have an understanding of who Michael Tilson Thomas was and what we are doing. We have them talk to the board consistently.

We have them talk to the audience as often as possible, and having Michael Tilson Thomas, who is an important musician and also a man who can talk to an audience in a remarkable way. He is their primary example.

In that particular category we have something called Inside the Symphony, where we put these players out into the community. They talk prior to the performance anywhere someone will listen, they're ready to go out and engage.

They also go out to specific audience segments. Some of them are alums. We have found that they can go out and speak to those alumni groups, and it works quite well.

We have something called Musicians Forums, totally in control of the fellows. They make up the programs, they decide what they're going to do, they bring in coaches and very often actors and directors who work with them to prepare their statements beforehand.

They're even in charge of marketing this sometimes, this particular event, which means that sometimes we have three people and sometimes we have 300. But the idea is that are they are making it up as they go and then speaking to the audience. So that's the kind of dialogue that we try and create.

Murry has done an incredible job with visual enhancements, which leads me to tell you first what we do and then what we envision.

Thanks to the Knight Foundation, we put an enormous screen up on Lincoln Road, which is the walking mall right in front of our theater. We did that for one season, and it had some very powerful effects, which are now going to come to fruition in a museum that we're planning.

We also have screens up in front of the theater now and in the lobby. Those screens are putting forward a lot of information about us, information about the institution in general, information about the fellows, and a dialogue with the fellows, introduces the fellows talking about the music that's going to be played that week. They do that continually on Wednesdays and the fellow's impression of what's about to happen that particular week.

Soloists very often don't have concerts that particular week, so we work hard to use those screens to get the word out.

We do visual program notes, very often over a very complex presentation which comprises two or three or sometimes five or six concert series and events. We have a videographer on staff, and he is in charge of conceiving of this and then sometimes we have a script written by a program annotator.

They look somewhere between television and a slide show you remember from grade school, and they create a wonderful mix of very simple and very straightforward statements and every once in awhile something that is right at the edge of television or video technology.

We're on the Internet2 system, which is 202 universities around the country that are on a high-speed, state-of-the-art Internet hookup that allows us to have realtime dialogue with anybody out there in the studio.

All of the composers, and sometimes that's as many as twenty-five in a season, are invited to have a dialogue with our players during the week. Then we put them up in front of the audience before the performance, and they talk about the pieces that we're about to hear, what was in their mind, how they conceived it, and how this should work.

Those are the ways we're using video now. We are four months deep into the schematic design phase of creating a building that is about the future of music and about the future of orchestras. It's being designed around a program that we built internally, with staff and with Michael Tilson Thomas. We've engaged Frank Gehry as our architect, in part because we think he's someone who can envision the future.

There will be various ways for us to present on an outdoor screen or screens through a park setting at the Lincoln Road Mall. We will build this building around Internet2 because it is such a powerful museum and by the time we build it, which is basically 2010, we will probably be on to



Internet3 or 4 or 5, but we will continue to have a high-speed educational connection.

But at the very bottom of it all, as you heard from my colleagues here, is the integrity in music, the fact that we will continue to do an un-amplified orchestral presentation. Well played, extraordinarily well played, community performances will be enough to put this music forward into the next generation.

We are trying to be agile. We are trying to be flexible, always with our eye on the musical and the artistic performance and hope that we are doing our part.

BROWN: Thank you so much. That was wonderful. We have about twenty minutes. I'm sure you all have questions or comments for individual panelists or generally on the topic of innovation. Please open up.

AUDIENCE: Thank you so much. This is really great.

There are just few random thoughts. When I saw the ads for the Taurus, it reminded me of a session we had on the dance side. All dance tends to get marketed the same way, and there is not this sense of the alternative culture, or alternative music. In some ways there is a disconnect between the fact that you have something that will appeal to that culture, they're not marketing it in a way to reach that culture.

How are each of you finding it trying to do what you're doing? Are people receptive to your ideas? Have people accepted your students? Have you shut doors or open doors?

SIDLIN: First of all, I apologize for having spoken so long.

DWORKIN: We were having a good time!

SIDLIN: I'll make this the shortest answer.

BROWN: Would you be willing to make your comments available to us?

SIDLIN: They have to be decoded, but sure.

I find audiences extraordinarily receptive, I'm happy to say, enthusiastically receptive. But, I find the profession very hostile and resistant.

AUDIENCE: What is your take on what we need to do to change that?

SIDLIN: I agree that we have to stop funding that which is not innovative. Just ask more difficult questions! Get to the core! If you keep putting good money after bad money, I don't know that

anything is going to change. But I agree that you have enormous power as foundations, as philanthropic organizations, to ask the tough questions!

You know if things are not good, if you're not making progress. There's an awful lot of deceit that goes on in this profession. We sit around at these conferences telling everybody how wonderfully we're doing. It's like this ideal couple that two weeks later we hear they've split. If you're not in the bedroom you don't know what's going on. In this case, if you're not living in the organization to hear the truth and to explore the difficulties of attracting audiences of high quality...

Sometimes we pretend, and we don't get to the core of it. All funders have the capacity to ask very, very poignant, right to the core questions to make sure that we have a prospect for making things better, for developing more effectively.

DWORKIN: Just to quickly pull off of that, is to make the focus of next year's conference be innovation or diversity. Have a keynote session with a panel on diversity or innovation talking about these things. To go off of what Murry said too, our experience, the Sphinx Finals Concert every year is sold out at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, not a venue that would normally be diverse, an audience over 60 percent black, and the remainder is white and Latino. Unfortunately, then sometimes people have the February concert, then it's all black, it's still not diverse. It's one or the other.

The broadcasts are very, very successful at the Sphinx concerts. But again, we find the similar thing on the flip side, of resistance in the field. I'll be frank too, because this is a funder conference. One thing that we experience, and I think maybe arts organizations that are focused like we are on diversity experience, is that there are rarely funding categories for what we do.

It's got to be fit in somewhere. I've had many major funders where we've been successful say, "Well, we've been able to fit you in here." There isn't a program, and so it would be fantastic if there was innovation or diversity program. Not that it doesn't exist, but we find it's not as common.

AUDIENCE: Aaron you've spoken mostly about who's working on an orchestra staff, who are the people onstage, who are the soloists that we're cultivating. By changing that, as we tend to change, the ripple effect happens. It's an extraordinary thing in a symphony orchestra



concert when you have that kind of engagement and involvement and this very, very powerful way.

What I'm getting at is that I think a lot of the work around diversity. Fortunately now, in composition, a lot of good things are happening, too. There are good people writing and the work on stage is one of the most powerful ways to influence who comes through the door. What that experience is of creating something that you want to come back again.

It's a marriage between what you and Murry were talking about.

HERRING: Two thoughts. Because I've done what I've done long enough that I have a little bit of perspective. I would challenge foundations to really find the energy. Look for the energy. You guys have your formats you've followed that justify your grants, be they large, small, everything in between in terms of size of organizations.

But I think given your requirements, large or small, and given the fact that you have development officers coming at you hammer and tongs, it's very easy to walk right past us, whether it's Aaron or Murry or the New York Symphony or the handful of energetic young players. Those guys are ready to go now, and they're ready to get it done today. They don't want to wait until they're forty years old! They want to build that orchestra. So you've got to look for the energy. And I know that's a tough assignment.

The second part of my thought would be that the key for all of us is more dialogue. That goes back to the formality of your process and ours. It's hard to get it started, not just before the grant happens, but after the grant.

AUDIENCE: We're in this together!

SIDLIN: Right. In part it's because you've got the money and we don't.

AUDIENCE: But you have the program and we don't! You have the players! You have the music in the community.

SIDLIN: Can I say one thing about this to Judith? I think this is a very important point that you're making. When I was at the Oregon Symphony, and Knight gave us the money for the first couple of years, they insisted on audience focus groups. They insisted that we actually listen to the audience.

And I thank you. I've got to tell you, I sat behind those cop mirrors in the back for two and a

half hours, which was scary! People talking about me for two and a half hours, you know? I took copious notes, and I learned an enormous amount, and enormous amount of what their perceptions were of what I had done, so different than I had it planned. It was an evolutionary process.

The people who set this thing up at Knight, originally, obviously had other experiences with other professions. It was brilliant that they made us do this, which is something orchestras never do. (A) We don't talk to the empty seats. (B) We hardly talk to audiences. And (C), we never hear people unknown to each other sit down at a table and talk about what we just did.

It is an extraordinary opportunity.

AUDIENCE: Murry, if I might use that comment just to transition back to the concert innovations. You're right on target. The leading thinking now about innovation, and there's some wonderful work going about the mechanics of innovation. How did it happen, really? How can we make it happen?

If I could come back to Murry's point about we need more dialog. There's no question about that, but I believe also this is a cultural question about building a culture where innovation is valued and rewarded, and achievement in innovation is rewarded.

Right now, I don't think we have that sort of culture. There's wonderful book here, *The Art of Innovation*. If you don't have it, get it. It's available through Amazon.com, and I've got a free copy here for anybody who wants it first.

But these are people who redesigned toothbrushes and shopping carts and everything. They always start by observing how people interact with the product or the program. And they make this very clear and concise point here that you can't let consumers define your product, because they don't know the possibilities. Right? But you can't be innovative without listening and watching and understanding how they use or interact with your product, and then go beyond that and understand the possibilities.

I highly recommend this, and I second Murry's whole idea. Listening! Listening to audiences and the folks who come and who don't come.

AUDIENCE: Another thing that's also really interesting is the way that they structure themselves is to never grow over a certain size, and so they've been breaking off and forming these little groups that work together. Their



buildings are designed to constantly shift and do it as well, because they really feel that as soon as they structure themselves in a certain way they will no longer be able to innovate.

BROWN: To the funders: How do you feel about innovation? Is innovation something you think about or talk about, knowing that you're constantly bombarded with requests for the basics?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I think about it, but not being an expert in the field, I have to rely on applicants to define whatever sort of innovation they might have in mind. I find it determines a sense of innovation or potential audiences. I'm afraid it's a passive approach.

AUDIENCE: But isn't there a risk with innovation that you might use extra caution as a funder?

AUDIENCE: No.

AUDIENCE: Did we see innovation in the organization? No! But if their organization is on a mission, we're on a mission and we're very focused. We have a mission. We have goals. And we're hoping we find some who have the same mission. It's up to them to come in with innovative ideas! That's great!

I think we've both got to keep an eye on what the goal is, and the goal is clear, the thing that we're all talking about, more people listening to more music and in different ways getting art involved in their lives! That's our mission.

AUDIENCE: Melanie has done so much as the program officer with highly innovative thinking about the orchestra world. But Mellon, and many institutions who think of themselves as funding leaders in the field, and I make some presumptions about leaders having twenty to fifty years of experience, being a certain size in their budget, and generally their funding strategy is to make very, very large grants for multiple years.

So the interesting question for me is it a mid-size organization under institutions where small areas of support are more likely to help.

BROWN: But failure is a desirable outcome if it leads to innovation.

AUDIENCE: That's exactly right.

DWORKIN: This is from our perspective, so I apologize for being very frank about these things, yes.

When it comes to diversity, in our experience, historically, the playing field is littered with failures. When large organizations fail, it doesn't seem to be a concern, and, again, this is purely from our perspective. It doesn't appear to be as great a concern about changing the funding strategy as of the risk of a failure of funding a small or non-established organization.

This one thing of this grand organization didn't work, but let's try something else, as opposed to, you see these things are really just too risky, and we need to go back to the art institution or the major orchestra or whatever.

I hate to disagree with you, but from our perspective the proposal process is the key because that determines who gets the money. Then it's working with them about how the program plays out. From our perspective if the institution that is applying for the grant doesn't have the vision, doesn't have the ability to be innovative, then that only gets determined in the proposal process.

So that if a funder says, "Well, these are the people we'll fund. Now let's work.

Someone commented about having the ability to greater delve into the proposal process, and maybe that's just not possible.

AUDIENCE: And find the energy, that's really what he is talking about.

DWORKIN: Yes, exactly, to somehow determine that.

BROWN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm so sorry. We're out of time. Murry, would you like to make a brief concluding remark?

SIDLIN: I want to go back to something that Jesse said. I too believe that even a concert without the things that I'm talking about, a great performance of a major work can be life-transforming. It can be, in the right hands and under the right circumstances. Unfortunately, we're finding too few people who are receptive enough, sensitized enough to make the difference that we want to make.

My feeling is, let's put into the concert hall things that we can't get at home, so that we can sensitize more people to that performance, to the music itself! Nothing should be an apology or an excuse for a sidebar. Nothing! Everything that we do should be designed to bring people closer to the core of it all.

There's a great comment that was attributed to the god Orpheus, who never lived so we can



attribute it to him. The lesson of Orpheus, god of music, son of Apollo, who was god of music and health, by the way, teaches us that to become truly musical we have to risk everything from the core and not the periphery. Everything we do must be designed to get people to the core of this.

Whatever we do that is innovative, ultimately, is to bring people to the center of the music. And then I think we'll succeed!

BROWN: Great. Howard, any parting remarks?

HERRING: One thing we learned from the Knight Foundation is directors come and go, chairmen come and go, board members come and go, executive directors come and go. There is one group of people who stay, and that's the players. They come and go but at a far slower rate. And that's both a blessing and a curse, but we have to turn that to be productive.

But that's where innovation cannot just happen but be sustained. You've got somebody who is at twenty an innovator, then at forty an innovator, and then you've got something very powerful.

BROWN: Thank you so much, all of you, for coming.

DWORKIN: I have one quick closing comment.
[Laughs]

BROWN: I don't believe this guy! You can have another.

DWORKIN: That wasn't closing. [Laughter] Just going back to what I originally said that this was a great dialogue, and if somehow the ideas of innovation and diversity can be on the main stage of next year's conference and the dialog happens with ten times this number of people, I think it would be fantastic.

END

