

RALLY



TROOPS

Music education advocates mobilize to ensure that no arts are left behind.

BY KARIN BROOKES

A mere 2,500 or so years ago, music was an exalted part of the school curriculum—right up there with gymnastics. Both were considered essential to a full education, and no less an authority than Plato said so. But no longer. Music education has slipped to the periphery in many schools, and has all but disappeared in others. Since the 1970s, when thousands of music programs disappeared virtually overnight from public schools nationwide, many communities have seen some restoration of school music education. But that progress has come piecemeal. There is little consistency from one district to another, from one state to another, and from one year to another. A district that funds music relatively generously one year may cut it severely the next. Orchestras have responded to the fluctuations with expanded education programs. But even as their offerings have grown by more than tenfold in the last 25 years, it has become obvious that orchestras and other music groups cannot replace whole curricula; their programs are most effective when pursued in tandem with an ongoing course of music instruction run by the local school district. Today, as more orchestras undergo long-term and strategic planning, concern over the fragile state of music education is growing. Its implications for the present and future health of orchestras have sent a new priority from the wings to center stage: education advocacy.

Advocacy Resources

Online Toolkits

American Symphony Orchestra League

Music Education Advocacy Tools 2005 includes links to virtually every useful resource.

www.symphony.org/govaff/what/090204advocacy_tools.shtml

Music Education Coalition

SupportMusic is a step-by-step guide to education advocacy and includes mechanisms to help you track your progress.

www.supportmusic.com

Arts Education Partnership

Clean and clearly organized source of music education research and reports—and more helpful links!

www.aep-arts.org

Understanding State and Local Education Funding

No Subject Left Behind: A Guide to Arts Education Opportunities in the 2001 NCLB Act (2004)

www.symphony.org/govaff/what/090204advocacy_tools.shtml

Education Commission of the States

www.ecs.org

2004-2005 State Arts Education Policy Database

www.aep-arts.org/policysearch/searchengine/

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Arts and Learning Resources for State Leaders

www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaaenews/index_anl.htm

Kennedy Center Community Audit

Learn how to audit the state of arts education in your local school district

www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaaen/specialinitiatives/ComAuditorSept.pdf

Why should orchestras take on this responsibility? As Charlotte Symphony Education Director Susan Miville says, “I want art for art’s sake, but without kids in the hall, everything is lost.” Children, whether or not they receive grounding in music at school, eventually grow up to be community citizens and leaders; and the local orchestra will quickly cease to be a point of civic pride if a dwindling sector of the community appreciates its efforts.

Audience motivation research conducted by the American Symphony Orchestra League in 2001 found that the average concertgoer had significant experience

Concern over the fragile state of music education has sent a new priority from the wings to center stage: education advocacy.

with music before age fourteen, and that 75 percent of the current audience had an opportunity to study an instrument—even if it was just a few months on the trombone in sixth grade. Unlike reading, playing soccer, or eating fine food, an interest in classical music seems to go into a long period of latency in early adulthood, before emerging once again after years of bread-winning and child-rearing. But this generally happens only if the spark was kindled during the school-age years.

And the payoffs aren’t immediate, either; the National Endowment for the Arts 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts found that the average age of classical concertgoers has held steady in the mid-50s for many years. The logical hypothesis that more music teachers in the schools will produce more people in the concert hall, unfortunately, would require decades of research to prove. Without decades to wait, orchestras have little choice but to advocate.

Demanding Accountability

Exactly what is music education advocacy? It’s educating all the constituents of your orchestra—musicians, staff, board, volunteers, audience—about policies or legislation that may negatively impact their children and the orchestra. It’s informing local, state, and national decision makers about the importance of music education. It also involves educating local policy makers about the orchestra and its mission. Mark

Slavkin, vice president for education at the Los Angeles Music Center, says that orchestras now have to see school boards as an audience for their advocacy.

It’s a new concept to many. Most orchestras have activated themselves around a crisis at the NEA- or state-funding level. But they need to understand, Slavkin says, that their school-based education programs effectively make them partners in a school district that is governed by an elected school board. However small that district (and New Jersey alone has more than 600 districts), public influence can make a huge difference in what is provided in



those schools. So advocacy for music education also means taking the orchestra’s message to the general public—your potential audience—and asking them to advocate on your behalf. Orchestras can’t get off the hook here, because advocacy in the local community is what changes music education funding and priorities.

Consider the climate in which orchestras find themselves advocating for the importance of music instruction: Even where school music programs have come roaring back since the budget cuts of yore—in cities like New York, Dallas, and Los Angeles—music classes no longer resemble those of 30 years ago, just as the curriculum for social studies looks quite different. Our nation has grown increasingly diverse,

and classical music represents just one slice of the huge musical and cultural pie available to students today. Classical music is no longer prominent in mass media, as it was when Leonard Bernstein enchanted so many television viewers or when Beverly Sills was enough of a household name to credibly host *The Tonight Show*. Many of today’s corporate and media moguls have little background in music and the arts; they, as children, lost out when the swinging budget axe sliced through arts programs in public schools, just around the time Sills was on TV.

There’s a brand-new concern, too. All schools, including the suburban school districts that managed to avoid many of the cuts that hit urban districts and were able to develop excellent music programs, are now likely to be affected by an Act of Congress that is changing the face of public education across the fifty states. The “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB) was passed by Congress in 2001 and dictates national policy for elementary and secondary schools. Because the Act is the basis for most federal funding to schools, its potential impact is huge. NCLB’s definition of core academic subjects includes the arts—but does not mandate standardized testing in areas other than literacy, math, and science.

Therein lies the problem for music education and, by extension, for orchestras.

In March of this year, the Center on Education Policy released what is probably the most comprehensive national study on the impact of NCLB to date. One of the four key challenges identified by the 49 states and 314 school districts in the study was a narrowing of the curriculum in order to increase the amount of mandatory time spent on reading and math. In New Jersey’s Bayonne School District, for example, the number and availability of art and music programs has been cut back and field trips put on hold for many months. *Academic Atrophy*, a report released in 2004 by the Council on Basic Education, shows significant decreases in instructional time for the arts, especially in schools serving primarily minorities. And *The Sound of Silence*, a 2004 statistical review from the Music for All Foundation, showed that reductions in

continued on page 58

extreme! CLASSICAL MAKEOVER

Introduce POPS audiences to timeless orchestral masterpieces in new and engaging jazz arrangements. With charisma, humor, and virtuosic playing, the acclaimed Capitol Quartet bridges the gap between POPS and Classical music in this fast-paced, fun and fresh concert program.



go to www.capitolquartet.com for program details and sound samples
Producers, Inc. | 813.988.8333 | www.producersinc.com | milt@producersinc.com

Make your orchestra

SING

Not literally of course!

But let his music bring the best vocal qualities to your audiences.



Proud Music of the Storm (2002) for SATB Chorus & Orchestra

Four splendid excerpts from Walt Whitman’s poem from the *Leaves of Grass*; commissioned and premiered by Vancouver Bach Choir with assistance from CBC Radio and BC Arts Council.

Prairie Dawn (1998) An eclectic concerto for clarinet & string orchestra with harp. The sense of open space and simple, pan-diatonic harmonies of this slow-fast-slow single movement are an evocation of the spirit and beauty of the West.

Find the choral and orchestral music of

Stephen **CHATMAN** at

ECSPUBLISHING COMMITTED TO THE COMPOSER’S CRAFT
138 Ipswich Street, Boston, MA 02215-3534 • www.ecspub.com • ph 800.777.1919

On the Front Lines

COLLABORATIONS MOVE ARTS EDUCATION ADVOCACY FORWARD.

Education advocacy is a complicated and continuous job that works best when orchestras join with educators and other arts groups to accomplish their aims, as these stories from New York City and Dallas demonstrate. They tell of success and frustration, a tremendous commitment of goodwill and resources, and a sense of community connection that pays intangible dividends.

New York: Blueprint for Learning

Last September, amid great fanfare, New York City's Department of Education announced a new music and art curriculum for the district's 1.1 million students in grades K through 12. It was a proud moment for the schools, cultural institutions, teachers, and teaching artists that had collectively designed the curriculum over the previous year.

The Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, as it is known, is the concrete embodiment of sixteen years of arts partnership in New York City. Back in 1977, when Mayor Abe Beame virtually eliminated the budget for arts education in public schools, he created a vacuum that seemed impossible to fill. Yet more than 100 arts organizations that had served public schools largely as "vendors" of arts education programs came together and created a forum that still exists today: the Arts in Education Roundtable.

According to American Symphony Orchestra League Vice President Polly Kahn, who was a co-founder of the Roundtable, it was originally a group of passionate arts practitioners and advo-

cates literally sitting around a table, "usually in some local coffee shop," she says. They had four aims: to strengthen arts programs; to talk to each other regularly; to partner with schools; and to be advocates for the restoration of arts education. They positioned themselves from the beginning as friends of the Board of Education, working as advocates and as allies. Over the years, the Roundtable worked consistently to improve arts education. Its members were determined not to alienate anyone.

The Blueprint is the ultimate fruit of those efforts. In it, the arts are given importance second only to math and literacy, according to Nancy Shankman and Thomas Cabaniss, who directed the creation of the music curriculum. Their committee, in the spirit of the Arts Roundtable, comprised equal representation from the schools and the cultural community. (Shankman was music supervisor at the New York City Department of Education, and Cabaniss was Kahn's successor as director of education for the New York Philharmonic. Both have since moved on to other positions.)

Having worked closely together since 2002, Shankman and Cabaniss used their relation-

ship as a model in addressing head-on the disconnect between educators and cultural organizations. Music teachers, they recall, felt nervous that their positions would be usurped by members of the cultural community—who, in turn, didn't realize that many music teachers were themselves practicing musicians. Shankman herself says she had a "180-degree turnaround" in her previously judgmental attitude toward cultural organizations.

The Blueprint's first year of implementation, Shankman admits, has revealed some weaknesses. "Teachers are slow to use community and cultural resources and to make cultural connections," she says; and conversely, cultural institutions aren't paying enough attention to the needs of teachers, accord-

ing to Cabaniss. "I had a dream that [the Blueprint] would begin to influence the way education departments at the major cultural organizations would program their repertoire" for education events. "That hasn't really happened. Programming still seems to be independent."

The mayoral election in November 2005 presents an unknown for the Blueprint's future, since new administrations can bring shifts in educational priorities. Moreover, none of the ten regional arts supervisors in New York City is a music specialist. But "this is our best shot," says Shankman, who is now a music education professor at New York University. She plans to introduce the Blueprint to colleagues at other state and private teacher-training institutions



Michael Divito

New York's Arts in Education Roundtable worked consistently to improve arts education. The Blueprint is the ultimate fruit of those efforts.

and strongly believes that the only way forward is through grassroots advocacy. Cabaniss, now music animator for The Philadelphia Orchestra, agrees: "The more this is done at the grassroots level, the more difficult it is to undo."

Dallas: Partners for Access

LeAnn Binford, director of education for the Dallas Symphony, has been advocating for better arts education for at least the sixteen years she's been with the DSO. She recalls a time in Dallas when "each elementary school had the choice of an art or music teacher"—and that was about as far as it went.

Today, a public-private partnership called Dallas ArtsPartners spends between \$6 and \$15 for every one of the 160,000-plus elementary students in the Dallas Independent School District, the twelfth-largest in the nation. Every school in the district receives access to programs of any of 60 cultural partners, of which the DSO is one. Teachers can choose from an online database of offerings and plan their curricula accordingly. "We've come a long way," Binford says.

Dallas ArtsPartners owes its existence to sustained and cooperative advocacy for arts education. A consortium involving the School District, the Office of Cultural Affairs, Young Audiences of North Texas, and dozens of local arts organizations, Dallas ArtsPartners grew from informal meetings in the early 1990s and morphed into a consolidated communication channel among

the city's arts groups. Binford recalls a school board meeting when members of Dallas ArtsPartners filled three rows as their spokesperson argued against the elimination of arts teachers in elementary schools. "Those teachers considered the consortium as pivotal to their ultimate success," she says.

It was strategic planning by the city's cultural commission that prompted the formalization of Dallas ArtsPartners in 1998. A study commissioned as part of the process revealed that "only 25 percent of children, and those mostly from the more affluent areas, were participating" in city-funded arts education, according to Giselle Antoni, then Young Audiences' executive director. Both the cultural commissioners and the School District saw the inequity as unacceptable—"elitism for children," as Antoni puts it. Striving for equity became the partnership's primary goal, she recalls: "What would it take to ensure that every kid had access?"

Funds for ArtsPartners come primarily from the School District, the cultural commission, and other public entities, and are matched by private donors. They are distributed among the city's public schools for professional development of teachers, tickets, and participation in arts education programs run by the 60 cultural partners.

For the Dallas Symphony, ArtsPartners' support means that every teacher who walks into Meyerson Symphony Center has embedded the day's Dallas Symphony youth concert into the class curriculum as part of a



ArtsPartners' support means that every teacher who walks into Meyerson Symphony Center has embedded the day's Dallas Symphony youth concert into the class curriculum.

three- or four-week lesson cycle. A youth concert last fall included music from different nations that helped settle Texas, including France, the Czech Republic, Mexico, Germany, and Spain, as well as Native American and African-American music; and was narrated by a modern incarnation of Stephen F. Austin, the "father" of Texas. ("Isn't he dead yet?" asked one young audience member.)

ArtsPartner funds go to the lead teachers who are partners in the program, and the partnership provides professional development, resource needs, and leadership training. Students get arts access and a broader, more meaningful way to absorb core-curriculum lessons. Teachers get support in providing that

broader experience. And arts groups like the DSO get kids in the hall, learning about music.

Antoni now directs Big Thought, an umbrella organization that coordinates ArtsPartners, Young Audiences of North Texas, and five other initiatives. Before ArtsPartners was formed, she says, the education departments of arts groups "were all marketing [separately], so it was confusing and complicated to the teachers. Our value was marginalized." Binford, meanwhile, stresses the value of networking with other arts groups. "It's the serendipity of working together. We've enriched our own culture. We've all taken a lot back to our own organizations."

—K.B.

continued from page 55

music education programs in California have been disproportionate when compared to all other subjects.

NCLB comes up for reconsideration in 2007. In the meantime, there's still a "golden opportunity" for individual states in the No Child Left Behind Act, according to

Heather Watts, the League's director of government affairs and education advocacy. By including the arts as a core subject, NCLB gives states the freedom to alter their accountability structure to mandate an arts education curriculum. In fact, virtually every state has introduced its own set of standards that demonstrate what stu-

dents should know and be able to do in the arts; examples include Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, introduced in 1999, and The Visual and Performing Arts Framework and Standards for arts education adopted by the California Department of Education in 2001. Around half the states mandate the use of standards, to be implemented at the district level; the remainder make them voluntary. To date, only a handful of states have incorporated them into their accountability systems.

How to influence the others in the same direction? You guessed it: "Advocacy," says Watts.

Art of Persuasion

Watts is a co-author of *No Subject Left Behind*, a resource guide for education advocates that is the result of a collaborative effort among several national arts and education organizations. One of them, the Arts Education Partnership, has been helping to steer local, state, and federal policy around to arts education. It's a national forum representing more than 100 educational, philanthropic, business, arts, and government entities.* By facilitating a dialogue at the national level and identifying best practices in arts education reform, it represents a wonderful, if elevated, model for the kind of grassroots advocacy coalition that, according to Watts, holds the greatest promise for improving music education at the local level. This, she says, is the kind of coalition in which orchestras can play an important part. (See "On the Front Lines," page 56.)

The AEP has also been instrumental in assembling a body of research that local advocates can use to persuade policy makers of the importance of arts education. *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (1999) summarizes seven major studies that provide evidence of enhanced learning and achievement when students are involved in a variety of arts experiences. *Critical Links* (2002) discusses 61 different research projects in the arts, including fifteen in music. (Both reports are available at www.aep-arts.org.)

Some of the most heartening support to education advocacy comes from what AEP Director Dick Deasy calls "that unexpected voice": Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee,

a conservative Republican, who gave arts education a huge boost when he made it the platform for his two-year term as chairman of the Education Commission of the States, which aims to improve state policy in all areas of education. Huckabee is the policy group's 40th chair (his term began in July 2004), but the first to propose arts edu-

part of the organization, not a machine you crank up only when there is a funding crunch. The members of the orchestra family are also, presumably, concerned community citizens. They are all affected when children don't get enough music exposure in school. When they successfully advocate for more, they will feel the

New York and Dallas, both involving orchestras from the beginning. Although these are large urban environments, education advocacy is just as important in smaller communities, if not more so. Their orchestras may have some of the strongest local connections, and comparatively greater influence on school dis-

All schools are now likely to be affected by an Act of Congress that is changing the face of public education across the 50 states: the No Child Left Behind Act.

cation as the focus. He's already set an example in Arkansas by revising state law to ensure that elementary schools offer a minimum of 40 minutes' instruction in music and another 40 minutes of visual art each week—to every student.

Political advocates like Huckabee are valuable—and rare, especially at the local level. But orchestras don't have to do it all, says Watts. In fact, they may be most effective in music education advocacy when they work in collaboration with school teachers, parents, and other arts groups. Take inspiration from the stories of collaborative advocacy in these pages, and peruse these ten pointers for launching your own music education advocacy effort:

1. Recognize that the most effective education advocacy is local, not national. While national service organizations like the American Symphony Orchestra League can make waves in Washington, education is a local issue, not a global one.

Advocacy is about local politics. Your school board was elected by people like you and the members of your audience. As elected officials, they should want to hear from their very own community citizens—including their orchestra—and they won't change education policy based on outside recommendations. Use League resources and advice to build your case—and then go make it.

2. Engage your musicians, staff, and board in your education advocacy efforts. Advocacy should be an integral

benefits.

At the Pittsburgh Symphony, musicians have bought into advocacy completely, according to Suzanne Perrino, vice-president of education and community engagement. "They come to us with concerns about music at their own children's schools," she says. "They speak at school board meetings." A lack of arts education, she adds, is "frustrating to those of them who graduated from area schools."

3. Start an advocacy coalition now. Partner with other arts organizations, local funders, arts agencies, and, most important, school districts. You need have in common only one thing: that you want better music education in your schools.

Where to begin? Almost all orchestras are already involved to some extent in their communities. So use the relationships you already have to build a coalition. Existing program partnerships provide a great basis for advocacy, because they cement relationships, extend your network, and show results that you can use in persuading policy makers.

See "On the Front Lines," page 56, for examples of advocacy partnerships in



trict policy than orchestras in large cities.

4. Recognize that the orchestra is only part of the puzzle. Discipline-based factions break down advocacy efforts very quickly. Policy makers and the general public are less likely than arts insiders to see the differences among music, art, drama, and dance. What does make a difference is when arts educators and arts presenters—including orchestras—work together. So keep it cordial and convivial. Be sensitive to the needs of others in your coalition, especially the schools.

MORGAN BRAY ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

SPECTRUM

Motown Music Comes Alive!

Motown, R & B and classic soul numbers enhanced by eighteen fully orchestrated renditions, four brilliant voices, angelic harmonies, snazzy costuming, and exciting choreography, Spectrum provides an exhilarating program of the music that defined the pop culture of the 60's, appealing to a diverse cross section of ages and musical tastes.

Voted Best of Las Vegas by tourists and Las Vegas alike in the Las Vegas Review Journal's annual poll, they've been featured in four major Las Vegas production shows as well as on television and film. Presently headlining in their own show on the Las Vegas Strip and on the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, they have performed for over 1.5 million people over the past decade in six countries.

"This first of its kind concert combining Spectrum's Motown presentation with the glorious sound of a full symphony orchestra, proved to be our most popular program in several seasons."

James Fahringer
Musical Director/Conductor,
Claremont Symphony Orchestra

"A rare, turn-away, standing-room-only audience celebrated with an enthusiastic standing ovation...perfect for fundraising."

Delphine Fahringer
Manager, Claremont Youth Symphony Orchestra

Don't miss out on the opportunity to treat your audiences to the unique combination of Motown music performed with a full symphony orchestra as presented by SPECTRUM!

Booking Information (702) 228-8336 Email: info@spectrumings.com www.spectrumings.com

*The AEP was established by four national entities: the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the U.S. Department of Education.

5. Make new friends. Get to know your policy makers. *Really* get to know them, including their personal interests. You might be surprised to find enthusiasms that haven't been tapped for advocacy. That superintendent that you saw as a bureaucrat may sing with great gusto in a community chorus. The chairman of the school board, who may seem distant and unap-

proachable, may have played the piano since kindergarten. Find out. Then work from that knowledge.

6. Use online resources. SupportMusic.com is one of several web resources available to advocates. (See "Advocacy Resources," page 54.) It simplifies the advocacy process by helping the user to build a customized case for music education, step by step—starting with the suggestion that you "Set up a small and enthusiastic team, and ask each team member to develop a network of helpers." Check the Government Affairs pages of the League's web site often (www.symphony.org/govaff/what/index.shtml). You'll find regular alerts and news on legislation affecting orchestras

and arts funding, as well as a section on Music Education Advocacy.

7. Use current research to build your case. Research that demonstrates the positive influence of the arts on academic performance can get you the ear of a policymaker, even if the point you want to make about the benefits of music is much

more complex. Get a foot in the door with facts gleaned from the online and published literature. (See "Advocacy Resources," page 54.)

8. Advocate for better data on student participation in music. Although there is research to support your case that music education improves learning in general, there is little information about how much music education is provided locally, statewide, or nationally. These facts will help you establish a baseline for improvement. So encourage your school board to provide accurate student participation data for music courses at individual schools and at the district level.

The National Assessment of Educational

Progress Arts Report Card, which assesses the arts knowledge and skills of eighth graders, was last undertaken in 1997 and the next is not due until 2008. The most recent information on the provision of music teachers in schools is the 1999-2000 report, *Arts Education in the Public Elementary and Secondary Schools*, by the National Center for Education Statistics

(www.nces.ed.gov). The League has been advocating for another report of this kind, so that orchestras can have some comparative data.

9. When there is a crisis, seize the moment. Jumpstart your network and get advocacy moving. And don't be afraid to use technology to make your case. When the California State Arts Council was slated for elimination two years ago, arts advocates immediately set up a web site allowing concerned citizens to e-mail messages and letters directly to their representatives in the state legislature, as well as the pertinent committee chairman, ranking members, and the governor. Concerned arts groups, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, forwarded the site's URL to their databases of supporters. The strategy was quick and effective. Although its budget was slashed, the Arts Council was saved.

10. Hang in there. All successful coalitions need a period of incubation. Longevity and consistency of leadership will make a big difference. Most successful coalitions include members of a decade's standing or more. Above all, don't become discouraged or apathetic if you're not successful the first time around.

And when you do meet with success, don't become complacent! Keep on making that case. ∞

Karin Brookes is editor of *Tempo*, published by WRTI in Philadelphia, and has written for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Classical Music* (UK), and *The Voice* (Chorus America).

Orchestras may be most effective in music education advocacy when they work in collaboration with school teachers, parents, and other arts groups.



Ian Shaw/Getty Images