

# Start the Presses

by Chester Lane

## AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LEAGUE INTER-ORCHESTRA BULLETIN

VOL. 1

OCTOBER, 1942

No. 1

### THE LEAGUE

The American Symphony Orchestra League was founded in Chicago on May 21 and the following officers elected: Mrs. Leta G. Snow, Kalamazoo, president; Mr. A. H. Miller, Duluth, vice-president; and Mr. R. L. Barron, Amarillo, secretary and treasurer.

An orchestra membership with voting privilege and fee of \$5, and an associate membership for "friends of the symphony," fee of \$2, were established. Over 40 orchestras in 28 different states asked to be included in the charter membership.

Money received to date has been used for expenses of necessary correspondence and the printing and mailing of this bulletin. No salaries are paid.

Officers of the league and leaders in the symphony field are promoting the league to those orchestras not responding to the organization call and work has begun on a district meeting plan to provide for round table discussion of common aims and problems.

Investigation of the possibilities for making more accessible the unpublished works of American composers was also started.

### THE BULLETIN

The bulletin will try to present the picture of the country's orchestras in their many stages of

development, how they serve in peace and war.

Until such time as district and national meetings can be held, the bulletin can substitute as a round table for discussion of common problems and exchange of data and ideas.

Requests for anything from music printed to music played, questions and answers, sent to the exchange column will be published. Busy little bulletin!

### THE PRESIDENT:

To the members of the League, greetings! And to all orchestras not yet in our roster, a sincere welcome awaits you.

I hope you agree with me that the banding together of our symphony orchestras is a forward movement in music and that all will gain from this union. I know that I have not the feeling of "aleness" now in starting activities for what may be a most difficult season.

How much we can accomplish depends on how much we share our experiences and do exchange our data and ideas. Active cooperation from everyone interested is needed to make the league a success. Let us have your requests.

A successful season to you all,

*Leta G. Snow*



It's had a variety of names over the years, but the essential mission of *Symphony*, the magazine of the League of American Orchestras, has endured: report the news, introduce the latest thinking, address controversial topics, provide a forum, offer insight and perspective—all of it focused on orchestras. Here's a look at how *Symphony's* coverage of the orchestra field has expanded and adapted with the times.

It all began 75 years ago in Michigan, with an orchestra manager and a music critic. Leta Snow, who had managed the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra for more than two decades and was eager to learn how orchestras operated elsewhere, decided to “form some sort of organization,” as she later wrote. Snow's first action was to invite representatives of “all known civic orchestras” in the United States—her list, compiled with help from Theresa Shier, a Lansing music critic, did not include the nation's largest-budgeted orchestras, which had already established a loose network of their own—to attend

a meeting in Chicago on May 21, 1942. The immediate result of that meeting was establishment of the American Symphony Orchestra League. Snow's second action was to create a communications vehicle for the members of the new organization: the *Inter-Orchestra Bulletin*, which debuted in October 1942 with Shier as editor.

Its inaugural edition, eight pages in length, opened with a statement from Snow declaring that the *Inter-Orchestra Bulletin* would “try to present the picture of the country's orchestras in their many stages of development, how they serve in peace and war. Until such time as district and national meetings can be held, the

bulletin can substitute as a round table for discussion of common problems and exchange of data and ideas.”

Since that time, the publication has reported on the orchestra field with an unwavering focus, covering the activities of orchestras and providing a vital, virtual roundtable for ideas, concerns, and information. *Symphony* reports news about orchestras, to be sure, but more than that, the magazine introduces cutting-edge research, provides a venue for provocative thinking, and functions as a resource for strategies that help orchestras. The elements that Leta Snow established for the early newsletters—industry news

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**2001**  
The iPod is released.

**2003**  
John Adams wins Pulitzer Prize for *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which commemorates victims of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks in 2001.

**1999 (cont'd)**  
League moves headquarters to New York City.

**2003**  
Henry Fogel named League president and CEO.

**2005**  
League and Meet the Composer launch Ford Made in America, a nationwide program for smaller-budget orchestras to commission and perform a new work, Joan Tower's *Made in America*.

**2008**  
Barack Obama is elected first African American president of the U.S.

**2008**  
The Nashville Symphony's recording of Joan Tower's *Made in America* wins three Grammy Awards.

Jesse Rosen named League president and CEO.

Death of the Unfortunate Acronym: the American Symphony Orchestra League is reborn as the League of American Orchestras.

Second Round of Ford Made in America, Joseph Schwantner's *Chasing Light...*

**2009**  
Lady Gaga's "Telephone" hits the pop charts.

**2009**  
League launches The Hub website of breaking news and information about the orchestra field.



The March 1951 edition of the League's *Newsletter* captured current concerns, among them the fate of a bill that would exempt orchestras from a 20 percent federal tax on concert tickets.

and League program updates for members, plus articles about issues affecting orchestras and the broader performing-arts world—are no less essential to the League's official publication today.

What has evolved dramatically over the years is how that original mandate for coverage of the orchestra field has expanded and adapted with the times. No one in 1942 could have predicted that *Symphony* would one day be available not only for League members and subscribers in print, but for everyone on the planet via some intangible medium called the Internet. When the *Symphony* team launched the online daily website called The Hub in 2009, it met contemporary expectations about content delivery by offering the latest news and updates about orchestras every work day. The media may have differed over the years, but the message—report the news, deliver original reporting, provide a forum for fresh ideas about orchestras—remains essential.

**Membership News**

As readers of that first *Inter-Orchestra Bulletin* saw, discussion and exchange had begun: the publication included news from League charter orchestras in such cities as Duluth, Minnesota; Amarillo, Texas; and Charleston, West Virginia. The last of those cities was home to an orchestra

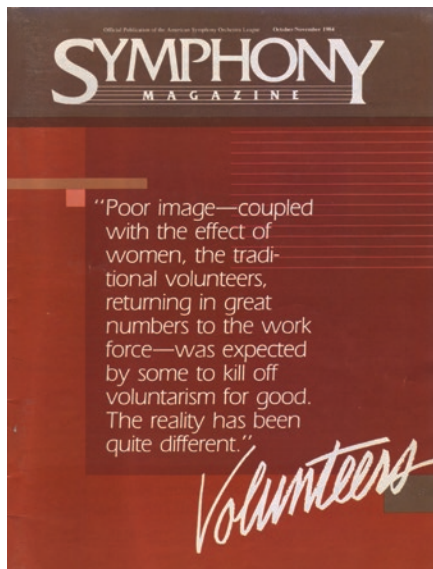
closely linked to the fledgling organization. Helen Thompson, manager of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra (known today as the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra) quickly became active in shaping the direction of the League. Thompson—who in 1950 would become the League's first paid executive—played a major role in supplying content for the *Inter-Orchestra Bulletin* and for the publication that succeeded it in 1948, branded variously as *News Letter of the American Symphony Orchestra League* or *American Symphony Orchestra League: The News Letter*. She reported on League Conference presentations and on the organization's rapidly expanding services; on member-orchestra activities and personnel changes; and on public policy matters such as the federal tax on concert tickets that had been imposed as a wartime measure but lasted until 1951, when it was repealed thanks in part to a



The cover of the August 1978 issue of *Symphony News*, with a cover line reading, "Aaron Copland carries home his Gold Baton in a Women's Council Tote Bag—At the 1978 League Conference in Chicago."

lobbying effort instigated by the League in one of its earliest public-advocacy campaigns.

When the *News Letter* became *Symphony News* in 1971, it initially retained the look of a newsletter but progressed to magazine format, with a designed cover and glossy paper. An upfront section combined general stories with reports on orchestras: news items in the December 1977 issue, for example, included "Arts Or-



The October-November 1984 *Symphony Magazine* examined the evolving roles of some of orchestras’ most vital supporters—volunteers—as increasing numbers of volunteers pursued professional careers of their own.

gанизations Call for Higher NEA Appropriations”; “Milwaukee Symphony to Perform at League National Conference”; and “U.S. Orchestras Settle Contracts; Montreal Reports Strike.” Another department, “Symphony Views,” consisted entirely of captioned photos.

The back pages of *Symphony News* contained digests of orchestra press releases—hundreds of them—organized by source and type of news. A curious feature was the

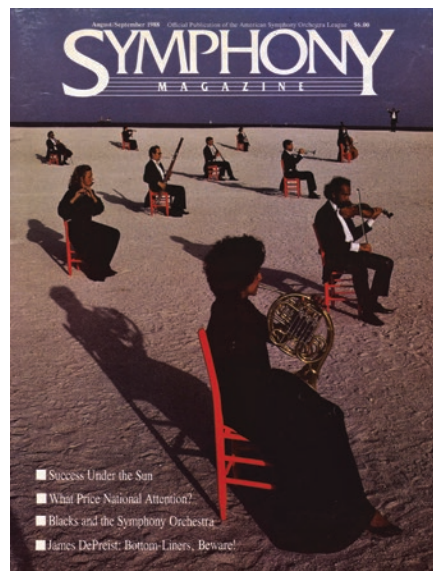
**Over the years, the magazine has addressed controversial issues by airing the views of thought leaders from inside and outside the orchestra field.**

bound-in “News Briefs” insert: a half-sheet of late-breaking news, clearly composed on a typewriter and printed separately. On the reverse side of the insert were such items as a calendar of League events and information on League membership, with an application form.

*Symphony Magazine*, a feature publication as opposed to a “bulletin” or news sheet, debuted with the June-July 1980 issue, sporting color on the cover (though not yet inside). Orchestras were no longer pigeonholed by budget size or professional

status, and their activities were reported much more selectively. News from the membership, and short articles spotlighting individual orchestras and people associated with them, were slotted into four departments, and rounding out the departments were “League News” and “Legislative Update.”

In the December 1980 issue, *Symphony Magazine* published its first annual directory of member orchestras, listed by state and budget category and including mail-



The cover story of the August-September 1988 issue of *Symphony Magazine*, by D. Antoinette Handy, assistant director of the National Endowment for the Arts’ Music Program and a professional flutist, focused on “American Orchestras and the Black Musician.”

ing addresses, phone numbers, and the names of each orchestra’s music director and top manager. Beginning in 1981, the directory included League-member business partners, and subsequently expanded to include digital contact information, board leaders, and the presidents of the orchestra’s volunteer associations. The magazine continues to publish the directory.

The final shortening of the magazine’s title came with the July/August 1989 issue: *SYMPHONY*, in all caps. The editorial lineup included feature articles, news from member orchestras and the classical music field, and two new departments focusing on individual orchestras and industry figures. The final issue of 1999 was the first to be edited in the League’s New York offices, which had opened that September. *SYMPHONY* saluted the millennium with an

## 2009 (cont’d)

First Orchestras Feeding America National Food Drive, held in partnership with the hunger-relief agency Feeding America.

## 2013

Orchestra Management Fellowship Program becomes Executive Leadership Program.

## 2014

Essentials of Orchestra Management course moves from NYC to Southern California.

## 2016

League publishes *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*.

League’s *Orchestra Facts 2006–2014* report provides publicly available analysis of orchestra finances and operations.

League’s *Reimagining the Orchestra Subscription Model* study analyzes evolution of orchestra subscriptions.

## 2017

The League celebrates 75 years of service to American orchestras.

## 2011

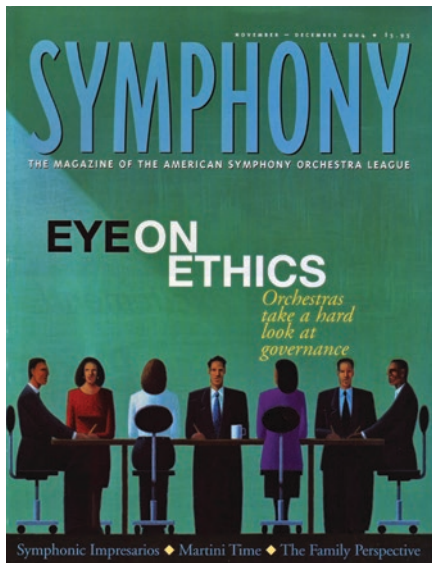
Arab Spring upheaval and regime change in Middle Eastern and North African countries.

## 2015

U.S. and Cuba restore diplomatic relations after half-century break.

## 2017

New York Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic celebrate their 175th anniversaries.



The cover story of the November/December 2004 issue reviewed ethical standards for orchestra boards in the wake of accounting scandals at Enron and the creation of federal laws requiring transparency in governance at publicly traded companies and nonprofits.

eleven-page musical timeline of the 20th century.

That imposing logo gave way to the more relaxed sans-serif font that topped the magazine's cover beginning in 2001. Along with that facelift came a new department called "The Score," now the home for a curated selection of orchestra news. Seven years later the logo would go from *SYMPHONY* to *Symphony*—a design update coinciding with the organization's adoption of a new name, League of American Orchestras.

### Content Management

Over time, the League's official publication broadened to include subject matter not just of practical utility but of general interest to the field about repertoire, composers, and the people who managed, conducted, and performed with orchestras. An early issue of *Symphony Magazine* looked at the recently deceased Leopold Stokowski with an excerpt from Oliver Daniels's new biography of the legendary conductor. Musicologist and program annotator Michael Steinberg contributed articles on Schubert, Schoenberg, and Messiaen beginning in the 1980s. Adrienne Fried Block and Jan Swafford, biographers of Amy Beach and Charles Ives, respectively, wrote about their contributions to the canon. Harlow Robinson, a professor of Russian history,

authored features in 2006 and 2008 on Shostakovich's symphonies and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* ballet score. After composer and conductor Pierre Boulez died in 2016, the magazine published first-person remembrances by musicians, conductors, and an administrator.

As for living artists, feature articles and profiles have brought working composers, conductors, and musicians into focus. In the 1980s and 1990s, the magazine began featuring orchestra managers, including Ernest Fleischmann at the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Peter Pastreich at the San Francisco Symphony, Richard Cisek at the Minnesota Orchestra, and John Edwards (a former chairman and president of the League board) at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. More recent profiles in the magazine have introduced up-and-coming soloists and emerging composers.

### In 1978, executives at the Albany (N.Y.) Symphony Orchestra extolled the virtues of a new technological aid to orchestras in a *Symphony News* article entitled "The Computer: A New Member for Your Symphony Planning Committee?"

Since its debut in May/June 2008, a back-page "Coda" has featured first-person narratives from such orchestral figures as conductors Marin Alsop and Gustavo Dudamel; pianists Leif Ove Andsnes and Christopher O'Riley; and musicians including Chicago Sinfonietta Principal Viola Marlea Simpson and Detroit Symphony Orchestra Bassist Rick Robinson. "Coda" has also presented some unexpected voices, among them actor and New York Philharmonic radio host Alec Baldwin; jazz bassists Esperanza Spalding and Ron Carter; singer/songwriters Rosanne Cash, Ben Folds, Sting, and James Taylor; choreographer Mark Morris; and National Football League placekicker Rob Bironas, who articulated his reasons for supporting music education.

### Tools and Issues

Topics of practical concern, and the shar-

ing of expertise by people across the orchestra and nonprofit field, have been features of the magazine since its earliest days. In 1978, Fred Leise and William Holstein, manager and president of the Albany (N.Y.) Symphony Orchestra, extolled the virtues of a new technological aid to orchestra administrators in an article entitled "The Computer: A New Member for Your Symphony Planning Committee?" Practical advice reached its apogee with the August/September 1982 issue: "An Orchestra Management Primer" included eighteen essays from managers on how and why they entered the field; reports on the League's recently launched Orchestra Management Fellowship Program and on a *Symphony Magazine* survey of internships; an article by Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra Executive Director Robert L. Caulfield called "The Qualities of Leadership"; and a resource guide.

In all its incarnations, the League's publication has not only reported on the organization's annual Conference but drawn upon it for feature material. Among the many speakers whose Conference addresses have appeared in the magazine are conductor James DePreist (1973 and 1988), conductor/composer Leonard Bernstein and composer William Schuman (both 1980), composer Morton Gould (1983), conductor Robert Shaw (1988), Ober-



The November/December 1996 issue included an article in which Boston Pops Conductor Keith Lockhart called on orchestra leaders to "dedicate ourselves to doing work on pops concerts that we can all be proud of."



The Seattle Symphony's June 6, 2014 performance of "Baby Got Back" with rapper Sir Mix-a-Lot ignited heated controversy. (A YouTube video of the concert received 2.3 million views in the first three weeks after posting.) *Symphony's* Fall 2014 cover story by Aaron Flagg unpacked the concert's implications for orchestras' relevance, ethnic and generational diversity, and repertoire.

lin College President S. Frederick Starr (1988), stage director Peter Sellars (2007), flutist and International Contemporary Ensemble founder Claire Chase (2014), and Maryland Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (2016).

### Room for Debate

Over the years, the magazine has addressed controversial issues by airing the views of industry leaders. That was the case in 1979 with composer-conductor Gunther Schuller, whose welcoming address to students at Tanglewood appeared as an article called "The State of Our Art" in the December 1979 *Symphony News*. "As we look around at orchestras in the United States," Schuller said, "apathy, cynicism, hatred of new music, are rife and abound on all sides." He took aim at both unionized musicians and orchestra management, saying, "Consider the fact that in thousands of pages of musicians' union by-laws ... you will look in vain for any mention of the word *art*.... Many American orchestras are now down to three rehearsals a week, regardless of the difficulty of the program, which conceals a hideous arrogance vis-à-vis music and performing, inbred with cynicism and apathy, which

precludes any ideals of perfection."

The article provoked a strong response from Irving Segall, then chairman of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians. In the following issue of *Symphony News* Segall wrote, "I see musicians in our orchestras all over the country who are enthusiastically involved in music, and very orchestra conscious.... They are contributing services to

marathons and other orchestra fundraising activities, and devoting time to achieve legislation to help solve arts funding problems.... Today's symphony orchestra musician recognizes that running an orchestra can no longer be left solely to business executives. ICSOM has made us conscious of that. It has taught us to have artistic integrity, while maintaining our self-respect by insisting that we have the same rights

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Composers under the age of 30 were the focus of the cover story of *Symphony's* Winter 2013 issue, with additional reports on orchestras' pursuit of younger audiences and generational diversity, and how some orchestras rethink concert programming to fit the changing cultural landscape.

and benefits as other working people in the United States.”

Even more incendiary than Schuller's remarks was a commencement address called “The Orchestra Is Dead. Long Live the Community of Musicians,” delivered by Los Angeles Philharmonic Executive Director Ernest Fleischmann at the Cleveland Institute of Music in May 1987. Fleischmann proposed “developing the rather rigid structure of the traditional symphony orchestra and turning it into a more flexible Community of Musicians.... In many areas of the country you find more than one orchestra within a 100-mile radius of a major population center.... I would propose ... eliminating one or more of the best ensembles and merging them into a pool of 140-150 highly skilled musicians under one expert administration.” In Fleischmann's proposed scheme, each “community of musicians” would be charged with “symphony concerts, chamber music recitals, new music programs, opera, ballet, and chamber orchestra concerts” as well as “the whole field of education.”

Fleischmann's call for eliminating autonomous organizations to create mega-



The cover story of *Symphony's* Winter 2016 issue gained national attention for its frank discussion among musicians of African descent about diversity and inclusion at American orchestras. Elsewhere in the issue: young classical artists embrace social media, effective tactics in reaching contemporary audiences, and how some musicians perform from memory.

orchestras serving multiple needs quickly gained notoriety. *Symphony Magazine* published a rebuttal by Thomas W. Morris, then the Cleveland Orchestra's executive director, in its March/April 1989 issue: a 3,000-word article entitled “Prescription for Survival.” Morris argued that with orchestras, “bigger does not necessarily mean better.... Fleischmann hints that the mega-orchestras would be easier to fund. I think the opposite is true.... It is unlikely that regional consolidation of orchestras will enlarge the financial bases and alleviate growing operating deficits.... Fleischmann's organizational and structural approach is an external solution to what I believe is an internal artistic problem.”

Airing the views of industry leaders on big issues in the orchestra world remains a key function of the magazine. “Unanswered Questions,” a November/December 1983 article by the League's then-president Henry Fogel, addressed how orchestras could reshape their future by confronting the past. (It received a Deems Taylor Award from ASCAP, one of ten the magazine has garnered.) Lowell Noteboom, the League's chairman from 2006 to 2014, contributed major articles on orchestra governance in 2004, 2006, and 2010. In a January/February 2008 article

**THE ROGUE VALLEY SYMPHONY**

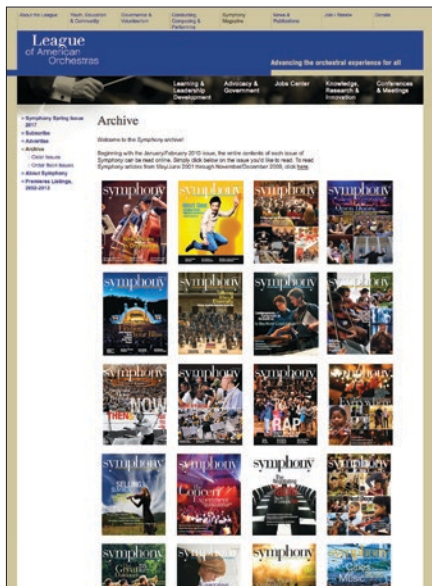
celebrates its 50th Anniversary Season  
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and congratulates the  
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Since 2010, *Symphony* has made every issue available for free at [symphony.org](http://symphony.org). Readers simply click on the cover of the issue they'd like to read. Select *Symphony* articles from May/June 2001 through November/December 2009 are also available for free online.

called "Radical Revenue" based on concepts introduced at the 2007 League Conference, Bruce Coppock, then president of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (and a former vice president of the League), outlined an innovative financial model at the SPCO that emphasized loyalty-based contributions over subscriptions. The magazine routinely receives requests for reprints and downloads, but "Radical Revenue" still gets reprint requests nine years after first publication. And today, *Symphony's* "Critical Questions" column by League President Jesse Rosen addresses topics ranging from financial sustainability to labor relations to diversity (both in the boardroom and onstage) to musical entrepreneurship to the public value of orchestras.

**Behind the Scenes at the Magazine**

In the early decades of the League's official publication, much of its content was supplied by staff writers and pro-bono contributors from the orchestra field. Since 1980, professional journalism has taken on greater importance, and staff editors and outside journalists have addressed a host of topics including musicians' concerns; orchestra education programs; community engagement; philanthropy; the relationship between art and political; diversity and inclusion; contemporary music; com-

poser residencies; gender parity; and entrepreneurial musicians. Some bylines have appeared in the magazine for decades, and the magazine has consistently featured veteran reporters and established experts as it sought out emerging writers.

"The Score," *Symphony's* staff-written news department, is today an eclectic mix of contract settlements, appointments, concerts, League announcements, educational activities, and newsworthy events by



Launched in January 2009 as an online service to League members, The Hub provides a wide-ranging, constantly updated overview of news and information about the orchestra field, curated and produced by *Symphony* staff.

a range of orchestras. While The Hub website provides the orchestra field with the timeliest coverage, "The Score" chronicles select events in the eye-catching format of a quarterly magazine. Together with the feature articles and columns that appear in each issue of *Symphony*, they "present the picture of the country's orchestras in their many stages of development," as League founder Leta Snow envisioned in that first *Inter-Orchestra Bulletin* of 1942. **S**

CHESTER LANE served on the editorial staff of *Symphony* from December 1979 to March 2017. His article "The Vital Role of Community Orchestras in America" in the November/December 2001 issue won an ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award.

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