

# Notes

the newsletter of

## The National Orchestral Association

### MUSIC UNITES US

In the coming year, may we be blessed with a greater understanding of each other, and a renewed appreciation for the arts and for the expression of what is best in the human spirit. If we are to continue our success as a nation, we must avoid petty bickering and celebrate our common ground.

Let us remember that we all share this planet together, and that we are measured not by the petty things that divide us, but by the experiences of things like music which transcend the ordinary.

As the pundits and political parties try to drive us apart, we who share a love for music can point to experiences that bring us closer together. Our love for expression and respect for the creative process knows no political, social or economic boundaries. Like the air we breathe, artistic expression is common to all people, and the sharing of music transcends all partisanship.

One of the things we do share in common is our great American culture, which incorporates a wide diversity of cultures and experience. During this time of national discourse, we can remind ourselves of the unity we all share by supporting those organizations that seek to culturally uplift humankind. Music is one of the great unifiers, in which people of all backgrounds can come together to experience the joys of pure creative expression.

In the coming year, let us all take a few moments to find common ground in the joy of music. Political issues come and go from year to year, but the joy of music is a constant that reminds us not only of our aspirations, but of our humanity.

*Matthew J. Trachtenberg, President*

### MUSIC CONSERVATORY OF WESTCHESTER

Founded in 1929, MCW is the oldest and largest community arts school in the five-county region comprising Westchester, Rockland, Bronx, Putnam and Fairfield, Conn. Counties, serving students from pre-school children to seniors.

### REMEMBERING LEON BARZIN'S COMMITMENT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITY



Leon Barzin was one of the first to embrace equal opportunity for all orchestral players, regardless of race or gender.

From its beginning in 1930, the NOA training orchestra had only two criteria for membership: talent and skill. Maestro Barzin adopted a color-blind and gender-blind audition process. He would have players audition behind a curtain, so that those judging the talent would have no way of knowing the race or gender of the auditioner. The results of this process were splendid indeed. Suddenly women and racial minorities became players in America's preeminent training orchestra.

Reflecting on Leon Barzin's remarkable advocacy for equal opportunity, Maestra Patricia Handy said, "When I was starting to make inquiries, this was not a time when women were conducting at all. There simply wasn't anyone. Life is very different right now, thank heaven, and partly because of Leon Barzin's efforts."



Barzin sought to broaden the makeup of American orchestras, giving opportunities to African-Americans and women, breaking down the prejudices against them, as he had also broken down the prejudice against American musicians in American orchestras.

Not only did he expand the race and gender makeup of the National Orchestral Association, but challenged the prejudice against American musicians in American symphony orchestras, which until the formation of the NOA was primarily comprised of European musicians.

At a time when American trained musicians were shunned by orchestras throughout the country, Maestro Barzin created a unique training orchestra for American musicians. Barzin noted that before the National Orchestral Association, "there were just three Americans in the Philharmonic at that time...and Americans had at least two strikes against them when they went up to audition for jobs. But if you phoned the Philharmonic and said you had just gotten off the boat from Vienna, there was always a chair available."

As an immigrant, Maestro Barzin adored his adopted country, and was active in supporting the World War II effort by holding concerts to raise money for war bonds. Aside from his efforts to support his country in a time of world crisis, Barzin generally eschewed politics. It was all about the music and not about one's background or political persuasions. For Maestro Barzin, music was a sublime way of bringing people together rather than dividing them. The musical experience was a means of uplifting all of humanity. In a world where everything seems to be more and more politicized, Maestro Barzin's work reminds us that orchestral music can be unifying, spiritually uplifting and provide aspiration and inspirational opportunity.

Maestra Handy said that "Now I understand. I didn't really at the time, but Mr. Barzin is one of these beautiful human beings who not only -- well, I shouldn't say not only -- he was completely unpolitical, to the point perhaps of really not only eschewing politics, but also a little bit struggling against it. Perhaps I could say that even it was an active thing against it, so there was never any politics involved with whom Mr. Barzin accepted or whom he let go. I mean it just did not enter into his operation, his life."

### **ARS ANTIQUA**

Ars Antiqua is a unique American music organization devoted to performances of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century music on period instruments. Its innovative programming has won critical acclaim and attracts a devoted following. For more information about Ars Antiqua, please visit [www.ars-antiqua.org](http://www.ars-antiqua.org).

### **THE STECHER AND HOROWITZ FOUNDATION**

In April 2017, the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation will hold a gala benefit evening in New York, celebrating the 57<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation. The occasion will also mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New York International Piano Competition. The Foundation's continuing mission is to serve as an incubator of talent in the world of classical music. The organization mentors young pianists by providing performance opportunities. Its flagship programs, the New York International Piano Competition and the Young Artists Series, have been responsible for identifying many incredible young pianists. For more information about upcoming concerts and to learn more about the competitions, please visit [www.stecherandhorowitz.org](http://www.stecherandhorowitz.org).

### **THE SPHINX ORGANIZATION**

Since its beginning in 1996, The Sphinx Organization was formed "to help overcome the cultural stereotype of classical music, and to encourage the participation of Blacks and Latinos in the field." Its vision and mission is to "transform lives through the power of diversity in the arts." The Annual Sphinx Competition provides minority musicians with the opportunity to work with professional musicians, and to compete and be judged by an internationally renowned music panel. The Organization has many active outreach programs geared toward developing an interest in classical music among underserved young people. Like Maestro Barzin, the Sphinx Organization not only seeks to provide exposure to great classical music, but to engage young people in the creative process with instruction, performance opportunities and inspiration. Please visit the Sphinx Organization's website at [www.sphinxmusic.org](http://www.sphinxmusic.org).

### **SETTLEMENT MUSIC SCHOOL**

The Settlement Music School is one of the largest community schools of the arts in the United States, and one of the tri-state area's largest employers of musicians. Settlement has six locations in the South, West and Northeast Philadelphia, Germantown, Willow Grove and Camden, New Jersey. It "provides 10,000 weekly services of individual lessons, classes and activities in music, dance and visual arts to children and adults" regardless of age, race or financial circumstances. For more information about this important organization, please visit [www.smsmusic.org](http://www.smsmusic.org).

### **LYRIC CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY**

The Lyric Chamber Music Society of New York uses intimate settings that promote a strong personal interaction between audience and performer. Programs are created not only to attract wider audiences, but also to engage audience members with a personal and intimate musical experience. This organization has brought together many of the nation's leading instrumentalists and composers, who also enjoy the experience of performing in intimate settings. To contribute to the work of this fine organization, please visit [www.lyricny.org](http://www.lyricny.org).