

## OUR ORCHESTRA'S LEGACY

by Diane Dickson

When beginning a new article for *Our Players' Voice*, I always find inspiration in the comments that you, the musicians' supporters, wrote this past summer for our letter of support. This time around, I was particularly struck by the many comments about the legacy of the Philharmonic.

For example, the Philharmonic is "an orchestra that has taken decades to build and that ranks as one of the finest mid-sized orchestras in the nation."

"One of the greatest things about this city is its arts community. The keystone of which is the longevity of the Philharmonic."

"We need the Fort Wayne Philharmonic at full strength to continue the legacy of a fine orchestra in Fort Wayne!"

These comments reveal that you are aware that the Philharmonic has been at the forefront of the Fort Wayne arts community for many years. I thought it would be interesting to look at the history of the Philharmonic and see how previous generations regarded their orchestra. What I discovered was a story filled with artistic ambitions and service to the community with every generation.

Although there were various attempts to organize an orchestra in Fort Wayne as early as 1924, the Philharmonic Society of Fort Wayne, Inc. was incorporated in 1944. The Society's goal was "to be the best orchestra a city of Fort Wayne's size." The Philharmonic's first conductor was Hans Schwieger, who fled Nazi Germany during WWII.

Schwieger's success was immediate. He attracted national attention to the orchestra for the "Children's Crusades," a community concert that featured a chorus of 250 children and 150 adults. *Time Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping* reported the event. Subsequently, the Philharmonic was featured in a December 1946 national broadcast on NBC's "Orchestras of the Nation" series. The new orchestra was off to an auspicious start!

In 1948, the orchestra's next conductor was Igor Buketoff, who had been conducting opera in Paris. Again, there was more national recognition. The Fort Wayne Philharmonic was heard on a coast-to-coast NBC broadcast, followed by a feature in *Newsweek Magazine*.

I discovered an interesting anecdote that revealed the depth of community feeling for the Philharmonic. In 1949, Princeton University Press published a magazine booklet entitled *Public Opinion Quarterly*. In it were results of a

nation-wide survey of American youth regarding their preferences about moving to a larger community. Fort Wayne was one of only two cities where the majority of young people said they would prefer staying in their hometown. One of the first reasons given by the respondents was their excellent Philharmonic orchestra and other cultural advantages. *Look Magazine* used the survey to run a feature on Fort Wayne, "America's Happiest Town," singling out the Philharmonic as a great contributor to this title.

Buketoff brought world-famous artists to perform with the orchestra that included Marian Anderson, contralto; Isaac Stern, violinist; Van Cliburn, pianist; and Andres Segovia, guitarist. During his 19-year tenure, Buketoff took chamber orchestra performances to outlying areas; organized the Philharmonic Chorus; expanded educational outreach with in-school string quartet performances; and started a series of children's concerts.

Fast forward to 1970, when the tenure of Thomas Briccetti began. Briccetti, a faculty member of the Cleveland Institute of Music, was an accomplished composer. He ushered in the modern era of the Philharmonic by expanding the "core" group of full-time musicians. Previously only a string quartet, the full-time  
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**ADRIAN MANN**

Interviewed by Dessie Arnold

This month, our featured musician is Adrian Mann, who has been in the Philharmonic since 1973. In addition to being Principal Bass, Adrian has had other Phil-related jobs:

Ensemble Coordinator, Stage Manager, and Orchestra Librarian. He also has written many arrangements and compositions for the Phil over the years. Adrian comes from a family of musicians: his grandmother was a well-known harpsichordist, and his father, a renowned musicologist, his mother, two brothers, and his two sons, all musicians!

With both parents being performing musicians, Adrian grew up going with them to rehearsals and concerts. At age 3 or 4, he remembers seeing Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and then acting it out with neighborhood kids in his backyard.

His mother taught him the keyboard from his earliest years. In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, he saw some visiting 3<sup>rd</sup> graders playing violins and started violin lessons. At age 12, he heard a Handel recording session and fell in love with the bassoon, playing that instrument through high school. At age 14, Adrian, with a background in violin, became fascinated with the bass since his father-owned bass was returned to their house after years on loan to a student. He was self-taught on bass for a year and then took formal lessons for many years. In addition to piano, bassoon, and bass, he can play all the other bowed orchestral instruments and has a basic knowledge of technique on the pipe organ.

Growing up surrounded by classical music, the deciding factor in Adrian's decision to make music his livelihood was his 4 years at music camp – Greenwood in Massachusetts. The strong music program in his high school was also influential.

In addition to his own professional life performing as a musician, he has often played music with both his brothers (one was a member of the Phil for a season), both his sons, and both of his parents.



To unwind, Adrian takes walks and reads. He also enjoys cooking dinner.

Most of his classical-music listening is work-related, but he says that he hears music often in his head throughout the day.

*I asked Adrian who his top three favorite composers are, and why.*

“This is always a tricky subject because all the great composers have their unique styles. If I had to choose three, then: Bach (his facility, sense of order, profound spirituality), Mahler (creative

writing for the orchestra, range of passion, and dynamics), and Respighi or Stravinsky (20<sup>th</sup> century language combined with 18<sup>th</sup> century form and style).”

The best part of performing for him is the audience engagement and enthusiasm, and having the hard work of rehearsing result in a successful performance. He loves performing with small ensembles, chamber orchestra, and the full orchestra, in that order.

The furthest Adrian has traveled in order to play was in 1976, when he had the opportunity to play with the Bethlehem Bach Festival in Berlin and Leipzig.

*I asked Adrian what advice he would give to a high-school-aged student who might be contemplating a career playing in an orchestra?*

“Since the classical music field is so competitive these days, I would say have another profession in mind. Involvement with music doesn't have to be professional to be rewarding!”

In addition to practicing the Philharmonic music, he works on music that he wants to play just about every day during his practice sessions.

Last year, during the pandemic, when the Philharmonic musicians were furloughed and there were few live music gigs, Adrian was able to stay inspired. Since he and his wife were able to squeak by on Social Security and savings, he had time to practice every day and enjoyed playing through much of the repertoire along with YouTube recordings. He also had several arranging projects to work on.

Speaking of arranging, Adrian first began arranging music for small ensembles when he was in charge of the Phil's ensemble program in the mid 1970's. In the 80's, he began writing orchestral arrangements and in the 90's, worked with local Gospel choir directors, transcribing and orchestrating their choral music. Since then, he has written arrangements mostly for Holiday Pops and Patriotic Pops. The most rewarding projects have been the few original compositions of his that we have performed.

In the past, the Phil had a lot of variety in terms of the different concert series and the audiences that those attracted. He has a few special memories of those. "In the early 2000's, we initiated the Unplugged series at the Arts United Center, highlighting local talent and programs built on popular themes, and the Stained Glass series, offering traditional sacred and secular music in different area churches. These concerts gave us the chance to explore unusual repertoire."

Adrian's years in the Philharmonic give him an interesting perspective of the growth of the orchestra and its music directors. Adrian and his wife Angela came to Fort Wayne in 1973 with their 1-year-old son Alex (who is now 49!). At that time, the orchestra was essentially still a community orchestra. The level of playing and dedication has risen steadily through all these years, as has the community support. He has found all four music directors rewarding to work for. It is always a challenge for a music director to respect the individual players' professionalism yet remain the one person in charge of all

musical decisions. With their own personalities, these four have done so in their own ways. Adrian can see two cycles in these years of growth: (Thomas) Briccetti was a strong innovator while (Ronald) Ondrejka matured the orchestra. Likewise, (Edvard) Tchivzhel expanded and renovated us while (Andrew) Constantine is molding us into a polished ensemble.

There have been many examples of programming outside the norm, or expected repertoire. Each season has had its own characteristics. For instance, on the Unplugged series, works by John Adams and Joan Tower were performed, and Ondrejka introduced much music from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (*Copland Symphony #3*, Wm. Schuman, Benjamin Lees). Under his direction, the Philharmonic was honored with five ASCAP awards for adventuresome programming (ASCAP - American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers). More recent memorable choices by Andrew are the Daugherty *Concerto for 4 Bassoons* with motorcycle motif, the Leshnoff *Starburst* accompanied by photos of Nebulae taken by the Hubble telescope, and the creation of the Bach in the Barn series, where in the 2017-18 season we presented all 6 *Brandenburg Concerti*.

The Pops concerts and the Holiday Pops concerts have changed significantly during Adrian's tenure. He remembers one of the first Pops concerts, played on an outdoor stage in the parking lot of the newly constructed Southtown Mall. Tom Briccetti brought a set of arrangements of Pop tunes of the day – *Raindrops Keep Falling*

*on my Head, Spinning Wheel*, etc. Since then the series has grown tremendously, with international star guests such as Roy Clark, Doc Severinsen, Shari Lewis, Aretha Franklin and Boots Randolph. The Holiday Pops series started out in the Embassy (we first played there in 1976) with programs built mostly on Christmas carols and accompanied by the Page pipe organ. Today, we enjoy elements of dance, the Fort Wayne Children's Choir, Broadway singing stars and a wide variety of symphonic and choral styles as well as many of the traditional favorites.

Over the years, he has noticed a change in the community's regard for the Philharmonic. "It seems we have always had enthusiastic audiences, but in the last few years I feel the stature of the Philharmonic has been increased in the community's awareness. The orchestra is cited as one of the major benefits the city has to offer and often considered the cultural high point of Fort Wayne."

*This question is from a non-musician friend of mine who loves the Phil: "What is it like to have a musical soul?" – i.e., How does it feel to have music be what gets you up in the morning or keeps you going?*

"The love of and involvement with music is a constant motivation and fulfillment for me."

*Would you like to share anything else?*

"I continue to be impressed and gratified by the hard work and dedication of our orchestra members, both on and off the concert stage."

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salaried core now included all of the principal players. These musicians were available to work during daytime hours, enabling them to perform small ensemble concerts for school students and for residents in nursing homes. Briccetti also started the Indiana Chamber Orchestra that performed its own series.

In 1978, Ronald Ondrejka, who was music director of the Santa Barbara Symphony, became the Philharmonic music director. During his 15-year tenure, the Philharmonic tripled its budget and more than doubled the number of full-time core musicians. He expanded programming to include the free Foellinger Pops concerts, the Spectrum series for chamber orchestra, the Freimann chamber series, and the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Young People's concerts. Ondrejka began a collaboration with the IPFW (now PFW) theater department and a partnership with Fort Wayne Ballet.

I joined the Philharmonic oboe section during Ondrejka's time and enjoyed his droll, understated humor when speaking to the audience at Spectrum concerts. As Principal Bassoonist Dennis Fick recalls, "The Spectrum series was very popular with audiences and musicians alike because it presented more intimate works in a smaller setting. Its intriguing mix of familiar and new works added to its appeal."

Edvard Tchivzel, who had defected with his family after a tour of the United States with the U.S.S.R. State Symphony Orchestra, became music director in 1993. He was known for exciting, high-energy performances. During his tenure, he featured young, prestigious competition winners to perform with the orchestra. The "Unplugged" series was started featuring light classical concerts with a casual atmosphere. I personally will not forget the sight of Tchivzel skating to the podium on his roller blades!

As Assistant Principal Bassist Kevin Piekarski remembers, "The Unplugged concerts were a creative, fresh approach that engaged a lot of people new to classical music. The ticket price included an after-party where audience members and musicians could mingle, eat good food and listen to live jazz. It was extremely festive and well attended."

Andrew Constantine, also the Music Director of the Reading (PA) Symphony Orchestra, has been the current Philharmonic music director since 2009. Under his leadership, the Bach in the Barn series was created, the first commercial recording of the Philharmonic featuring the music of Walter Bricht was made, an annual conductor training workshop was initiated, and a 2019 concert featuring the historic Violins of Hope was presented.

We thank you, the musicians' supporters and music lovers, for reminding us of the Philharmonic's storied legacy.

As a former member of the orchestra for over 20 years, I was privileged to "sing for my supper," making a living doing what I loved. Although concert series have changed significantly since I was a member, audiences can find new ways to experience the Philharmonic.

While dealing with the challenges of Covid-19, you may have noticed that the 2021-22 season line up of concerts is not what it was before the pandemic. Although there are fewer concerts this season, the musicians of the Philharmonic are glad to be back to work. You will recall that the musicians' recent contract settlement was for one year and will have to be renegotiated in 2022. At that time, we look forward to the resumption of a full calendar of performances and the continuation of the spirit of innovation, creativity and service to the community that has consistently characterized the Fort Wayne Philharmonic throughout its long history.

As one of our supporters so eloquently wrote, "We need more music -not less - to unify the community and our country during this painful time."

*I gratefully acknowledge Anita Cast for her article, "The History of the Phil," which was a rich source for much of the historical information found in this writing. You can read her entire article, including additions, at the Fort Wayne Philharmonic website by going to <https://fwphil.org/about-the-phil>.*

*Our Players' Voice is published by the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Players' Association. Our writers include Diane Dickson, retired Philharmonic oboist and Dessie Arnold, retired Philharmonic violinist. For more information, visit our website at [www.fwpmusicians.com](http://www.fwpmusicians.com). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).*