

Salisbury Symphony Orchestra Annual Report 2009-2010

A Letter from the Advisory Board Chair

As we conclude another year of the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra at Salisbury University, the Advisory Board looks with optimism and confidence to the next performance season, having met challenges in our own sphere and addressed issues that unfortunately are threatening orchestras everywhere. Some belt tightening deftly applied to the budget by manager Derek Bowden, together with Fulton School Dean Maarten Pereboom and Conductor Jeffrey Schoyen, allowed us to maintain our performance agenda and bring four brilliant concerts to our audiences. With local businesses also facing tough financial situations, we definitely felt the impact on sponsorships and advertising. However, at our fiscal year end meeting in June, we were proud to enumerate the goals set forth in the previous year that we have attained. Kudos to all who made that happen and to the outstanding job that board members Richard Culver and Liz Layton, and web manager Todd Smith, have done with our Web site. It has come a long way—looks great and works well. In the end, the Eastern Shore community was able to experience another season of quality symphonic entertainment.

The challenges that I refer to above include, not just the economic conditions that currently prevail, but the fact that there is a decline in patronage for symphonic orchestras and for classical music everywhere. This relates to both the aging of the audience and the dearth of young listeners to replace them. There is much analysis being compiled by those in the field who feel alarm at this trend and by those determined and committed to the survival of this art form now and for future generations. As public support and available funds for the arts have withered with the economy, so has the availability of educational venues to sustain music appreciation. There are a multitude of factors (cultural, societal and financial) that combine to jeopardize not just the music arts, but all fine arts. The reality is that we must strategize and work a little harder to promote the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra as a tangible asset to the community.

We must also implement methods to grow listeners while they are young. We have already been doing this with the successful addition of the fall Children's Concert three years ago. It is our hope that this concert becomes a tradition on Delmarva for years to come—it's a great way to introduce children to musical performance. It has been heartening to note that certain high profile musicians, such as Sting, Josh Groban, Paul McCartney and Carrie Underwood, tour with full orchestras and draw thousands of fans, thus exposing the youngest in their audiences to the beauty and importance of the symphonic component. Sting performed in January 2010 with the Philadelphia Philharmonic at the Academy of Music's 153rd anniversary performance to benefit the Academy's Restoration Fund.

The funding for student scholarships for Salisbury University's Department of Music is yet another draw for young musicians. Dr. Linda Cockey has worked tirelessly to improve and elevate the department and those efforts have included the availability of funds for attracting talented music majors to SU. Many high school seniors considering a career in music may not otherwise have the means to attend expensive music camps, providing the opportunity to sit alongside professional players. We can now offer them that experience.

In May we formed a committee to explore and develop ways to bring an education outreach program to the tri-county region of the Lower Shore and perhaps even Sussex County. Richard Culver and his staff in Public Relations have been developing "Education and Outreach," a new feature on our Web site for kids of all ages. By identifying school music teachers who would be willing to get involved, we hope to see more students at SSO concerts. Since extracurricular activities now come at a direct cost to parents, many of whom simply cannot afford them, community initiatives often fill the void (i.e., The Instrument Barn). There are students in the system whose talents and proclivities do not necessarily extend to usual after school activities, such as sports or language clubs. If bands, music clubs, a Capella groups, theater productions, etc., are readily accessible to all students, then innate talent and keen interest can often be transformed into passion and profession.

Furthermore, we must market aggressively to the business community to procure sponsors and advertisers to supplement the performance budget. The volunteer SSO board is comprised equally of community members and SU staff. Each of us is cognizant of these challenges and it is always gratifying to see volunteers come together to work for the greater good. A lot of hard work goes into each year of sustaining our core mission: bringing live symphonic music to Salisbury and the broader Delmarva Peninsula, and to the Salisbury University community. To this point, Liz Layton, Judy Jackson and Phyliss White are compiling a chronological history of our 25 years which will then be converted into a Power Point presentation. This project will highlight the many ways in which the Symphony has impacted our community over the years and become an invaluable part of our cultural heritage. To mark the occasion of our banner 25th Anniversary year, plans are also underway for a Gala in the spring of 2011 which will be both celebratory and revenue generating. Judy Jackson and Kimberly Roemer-Granger are co-chairing this committee.

Lee Knier, a community board member who also happens to be a faculty member in SU's Music Department, arranged receptions after each concert this year with light refreshments provided as a good will outreach to patrons and players alike. Guest artists graciously attended these receptions and were very accessible to anyone with questions about them or the performance. Lee has acted as interim conductor in the past and his affable nature bodes well for the board's desire to have our loyal attendees feel appreciation and a sense of inclusion as supporters of the SSO.

- Having outlined our goals for 2010/2011 relative to this past year's activities, I will recap last season's concerts:
- The Children's Concert on October 17 was the slightly offbeat "The Composer is Dead," a collaborative effort between Nathaniel Stookey and Lemony Snicket (the nom de plume of Daniel Handler) designed to introduce children of all ages to orchestra sections. With the engaging and flawlessly delivered narrative by Dr. Maarten Pereboom and the coaxing of a surprisingly complex interaction between strings, percussion, woodwinds, and brass by Dr. Jeffrey Schoyen, the piece came to life in Holloway Hall to the delight of children and their parents. We were ahead of the curve on this one since we performed this months ahead of the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center. This year's Children's Concert was once again sponsored by Dr. James Crouse and also the Salisbury University Alumni Association, Delmarva Chapter.
- In December, we were fortunate to be graced with the presence of Anton Miller, a violinist of international standing and accomplishment who played selections from Brahms, Glinka and Strauss, to mention a few, to bring Dr. Schoyen's theme of a "Romantic Holiday" concert to a near sold out crowd. In a departure from the more traditional holiday music from past years, the captivating mood of the program was very well received. The holiday concert was sponsored by Livingston, Hammond & Hill, LLC, a new sponsor for us and we thank them sincerely.
- The concert of March 6th showcased the talents of inveterate musician/teacher/conductor Gwen Toth – a mover and shaker in the world of concert musicians in New York City. Gwen braved the elements (the East Coast had a bit of a rough winter) to drive herself and her instruments down for the concert and stayed for the reception despite the long drive home that evening. The concert was entitled "An evening of Baroque Music" and she treated the audience to instruments not often heard here, namely the Fortepiano and the Harpsichord, intrinsic to many Baroque works. Dr. Schoyen concluded the evening with Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (A Little Night Music) and Haydn's *Symphony No. 49 in F minor, La Passione*. It was a wonderful evening for those of us who "go for Baroque." PNC Bank was the very generous sole sponsor of this concert.
- Lastly, in a bravura spotlighted role as 'conductor as player', Dr. Schoyen's talents as a premier cellist shone as our featured "guest" artist. He generously wore two hats for the season's final concert which aided us immeasurably in our budgetary constraints. The Board wishes to gratefully acknowledge this contribution as well as to thank Lee Knier for again filling the conductor's shoes. The audience took a

“Musical Tour of Europe” featuring Haydn’s *Cello Concerto in C Major*. The concert was co-sponsored by Peninsula Orthopaedic Associates and the SSO Advisory Board.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the Advisory Board members for their time and effort in making this last year memorable, productive and collegial.

Respectfully submitted,

Mellinda Brandon, Chair

Salisbury Symphony Orchestra Advisory Board