

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR ORCHESTRA LIBRARIAN

by Marcia Gittinger

The role of the orchestra librarian can be simple or very complex. During the next year we will take a look at various aspects of the “informational hub” of the orchestra: the who, what, where, when, and even the why of the library.

The Major Orchestra Librarians Association (MOLA) defines the orchestra librarian as a specialist in music who works in a performance library setting. This person must be a “musician in the widest sense of the word and also a specialist in the care and management of an orchestra’s music collection.”

As a manager/administrator you should now be asking yourself the following questions:

1. Who handles the music now, and if it is not a librarian, does our organization need one? (Yes, of course it does!)
2. Do we have a job description with the duties and expectations carefully defined?
3. Where is our music stored, and how is it organized? Does our organization have adequate facilities for a library?

Now let us examine each of these questions.

1. Some orchestras have managers who also find the music and distribute it. Some have their conductors worry about it. Still others have a music librarian who also performs with the ensemble. Orchestras with limited seasons can usually manage with a very part-time librarian; however, the more concerts you present, the more staff time you need to give to the library. This leads us into question #2.

2. To protect both the librarian and the organization, a written job description is a must. Although librarians can do amazing things, mind-reading should not be one of them! Our byword is preparedness, and to help you begin to design a job description, here are some of the most common tasks of an orchestra librarian. Please remember that you have a unique organization, and you may need to assign additional (or fewer) duties than those listed.

- Catalogue and maintain the music holdings.
- Develop and maintain working relationships with conductors, musicians, staff, publishers, and artists.
- Research and obtain repertoire.
- Provide instrumentation to the operations department and the personnel manager.
- Proof, edit, repair, mark bowings on, and fix page turns in, all parts and scores.

- Compile and then break down all folders.
- Design a sign-out system for the music.
- Compose program notes and maintain accurate timings.
- Report performances to ASCAP and BMI.
- Maintain performance, artist, and conductor files.

Of course, in order for your librarian to do all of these jobs, s/he will need facility and supply support. This brings us to question #3.

3. Where is your music library now? In an administrative building, at the concert site, in the trunk of a car? Your library needs (and deserves) the following:

- X-ray-size file cabinets and/or open shelving, with appropriate containers for music storage;
- A photocopying machine;
- A long, smooth countertop for assembly purposes;
- General office supplies: typewriter, telephone, chairs, desk, pens, pencils, tape, erasers, etc.;
- Access to a mail room (for packaging and mailing boxes);
- Research capabilities: Daniels’s *Orchestral Music*, a *Grove Dictionary*, the American Symphony Orchestra League’s OLIS, a polyglot dictionary, publishers’ catalogues, and general reference books.

A point to remember is that the library is where information is accumulated as well as disseminated. Consequently, file storage and retrieval are very important.

I hope that these few paragraphs have started you thinking about how the music library and librarian can help your organization. In the next issue I will address purchasing music versus rental, consortium purchases, copyright issues, and music licensing agreements. Meanwhile, questions may be addressed to Marcia Gittinger, Librarian, National Symphony Orchestra, Kennedy Center, Washington, DC 20056, 202-416-8130. =p

Marcia Gittinger is President of the Major Orchestra Librarians Association. Her background includes performance and education degrees from the Capital University Conservatory of Music (Columbus, Ohio), as well as professional opera, ballet, musical theatre, and symphonic performances. She has been a librarian with the National Symphony since 1983.

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[part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#)

[back to The Press Room](#)