

Inspired by Orpheus: Collaborative Rehearsal and Performance in the Large Ensemble Setting

The Ohio State University Symphonic Band
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Room W183 • McCormick Place Convention Center • Chicago, IL

Adopting the “Orpheus Way”

The way in which the internationally acclaimed Orpheus Chamber Orchestra rehearses and performs - collaboratively, without aid of a traditional conductor - calls its musicians to strike a balance of important human, musical, and corporate juxtapositions: leadership and followership; speaking and listening; structure and improvisation; agreement and disagreement; extraction and assimilation; exploration and prioritization; unity and variety. Such an approach calls each musician to craft informed opinions; to be responsible for an individual part as well as its relationship to every other part; and to engage music and others with honesty, vulnerability, passion, ownership, respect, professionalism, grace, and tact.

Since the autumn of 2013, the musicians of the Symphonic Band at Ohio State have been exploring and adapting an Orpheus-inspired process of rehearsal and performance as a partner to “traditional” large ensemble experiences. Provided with full scores of a given composition, the student musicians are charged with: planning each rehearsal; attending to the technical and artistic details of the composition; developing, adapting and employing rehearsal strategies; evaluating success at both the micro and macro levels; and ultimately leading a performance of the work that strives to honor the intent of the composer.

A website containing video of rehearsal footage and interviews with students and conductor has been created to document the process and aid other educator/conductors curious about adopting this approach. The site can be accessed via the link at: music.osu.edu/people/jones.4371.

Benefits to Student Musicians

- Ownership of the “greater whole” of a composition
- Engagement with rehearsal and musical priorities
- Formation and expression of opinions - musical and interpersonal
- Experience with compromise as an integral component to music making with others
- Frequent opportunity for creative decision making
- Development of effective, succinct, and tactful modes of communication
- Deepened interpersonal relationship within the ensemble
- Meaningful interactions with a full score
- Heightened listening within sections and across the ensemble
- Intensified sense of ensemble accomplishment

Necessary Resources

- Willingness to embrace an atypical and “messy” process
- Trust in students as both people and musicians
- Repertoire that is both musically rich and that “fits” the musicians/ensemble
- Strong belief in nurturing independent musicians
- A full conductor score for each musician - secure permission
- Introduction/orientation to full score reading (dependent upon development)
- Reference recordings
- Rehearsal recordings (at least audio)
- Additional rehearsal time for the process

Our Best Practices

- Time for planning each rehearsal is essential to success. Similarly, afford students time at the end of each collaborative rehearsal for reflection and goal setting for ensuing rehearsals.
- It is best to have students stand when they have something to say.
- Speaking concisely at all times - a learnable skill - aids both rehearsal enjoyment and efficiency.
- Students have a tendency to *talk* about what they want rather than demonstrating on their instruments. Encourage students to model note lengths, style, phrase shape, and the like whenever possible.
- Students need to be polite, but also honest. “Tact is the fine art of making a point without making an enemy.”
- Students will often avoid exploration of emotional meaning/impact to the listener (i.e. “What do we want the listener to “feel” at the arrival of letter G?”). Encourage this kind of exploration.
- Visual sight lines are important. Concentric semi-circles may not always be the best arrangements for the ensemble.
- Students need to be guided on how to indicate a preparatory beat and downbeat with their instrument.
- Frustration can be an incredible motivator in meaningful learning.

About Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

A standard-bearer of innovation and artistic excellence, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra is one of the world’s foremost chamber orchestras. Orpheus was founded in 1972 by Julian Fifer and a group of like-minded young musicians determined to combine the intimacy and warmth of a chamber ensemble with the richness of an orchestra. With 71 albums, including the Grammy Award-winning *Shadow Dances: Stravinsky Miniatures*, and 42 commissioned and premiered original works, Orpheus rotates musical leadership roles for each work, and strives to perform diverse repertoire through collaboration and open dialogue.

Performing without a conductor, Orpheus presents an annual series at Carnegie Hall and tours extensively to major national and international venues. The 2014-2015 Season will include debut appearances by pianist Fazil Say and violinists Jennifer Koh and Augustin Dumay, and also includes three newly commissioned works. The 2014-15 season continues an exploration of Beethoven in performance with pianist Jonathan Biss, while new looks at favorites from the Orpheus catalog of recordings, including Haydn’s Symphony No. 80, Grieg’s *Holberg Suite*, and Wagner’s *Siegfried Idyll*, demonstrate how these musicians have evolved over decades of playing together.

Orpheus has trademarked its signature mode of operation, the Orpheus Process™, an original method that places democracy at the center of artistic execution. It has been the focus of studies at Harvard and Stanford, and of leadership seminars at Morgan Stanley and Memorial Sloan-Kettering

Hospital. Two unique education and engagement programs, *Access Orpheus* and *Orpheus Institute*, aim to bring this approach to students of all ages.

Access Orpheus, Orpheus' educational initiative, shares the orchestra's collaborative music-making process with public school students from all five boroughs in New York City. Because of declining resources for arts education, many public schools do not have access to fulltime arts teachers to provide music instruction and exposure to art and culture. *Access Orpheus* helps to bridge this gap with in-class visits, attendance at working rehearsal, and free tickets for performances at Carnegie Hall.

Orpheus Institute brings the Orpheus Process and the orchestra's musicians to select colleges, universities, and conservatories to work directly with musicians and leaders of tomorrow. Students in all fields of study learn from Orpheus' creative process and in areas of collaboration, communication, creative problem solving, and shared leadership. In the coming seasons Orpheus will continue to share its leadership methods and performance practices as the ensemble provides its audiences with the highest level of musicianship and programming.

For further information about either *Access Orpheus* or *Orpheus Institute*, contact Shruti Adhar, Director of Strategic Partnerships at sadhar@orpheusnyc.org

Resources

Song for My Children by Andrew Boysen, Jr.

available through the composer (andrewboysen@hotmail.com)

Eagle Squadron March by Kenneth J. Alford, ed. R. Mark Rogers

available through the composer (mrogers2@satx.rr.com)

Ohio State Symphonic Band Collaborative Rehearsal Videos: music.osu.edu/people/jones.4371

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra - orpheusnyc.org

Dr. Scott A. Jones - Associate Professor, The Ohio State University - jones.4371@osu.edu

Jonathan Spitz - Artistic Director, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra - jspitz@orpheusnyc.com

Dr. David Hedgecoth - Assistant Professor, The Ohio State University - hedgecoth.1@osu.edu

Dr. Marc Parulekar - Pickerington North HS (Pickerington, OH) - Marc_Parulekar@plsd.us

Selected Resources

This annotated bibliography represents a range of sources, both scholarly and otherwise, that explore the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the theories and practices associated with its work and success. Drawing from a broad range of literature, the resources here represent case studies, research articles, books, videos and pieces from business and orchestral magazines.

Banai, M., Nirenberg, J. & Menachem, M. (2000). Leadership in Self Managing Organizations: Orpheus and a Date Plantation. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7 (3).

The authors of this article investigate organizational behavior in two cases, Orpheus being one, and how it is practiced within those organizations. The authors summarize the lessons taken from each case and apply them generally to firm governance.

Gastil, John. (1997). A definition and illustration of democratic leadership. In K. Grint (Ed.), *Leadership: Classical, contemporary, and critical approaches*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chapter 8 of this book is a scholarly discussion of the elements and practices of democratic leadership. The chapter offers a comprehensive reading of literature in democratic leadership and illustrates potential applications.

Hackman, R., Gonzalvez, A. & Lehman E. (2002). *Nobody on the podium: Lessons about leadership from the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra* (DVD). Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government.

Nobody on the Podium is a case study presented through a 26 minute video. The video contains footage from rehearsals and tours over time, including individual interviews with members of the orchestra demonstrating the internal tensions, difficulties, and successes of the approach.

Hackman, Richard. (2002). *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performance*. Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.

Throughout this critically acclaimed book, Orpheus is used as an example of a successful self-managing organization. Chapters 3 and 6 refer most often to the Orchestra.

Heller, Ayelet. (2003). *Orpheus in the Business World*. Documentary Film. Euro Arts Films.

Following a presentation of Orpheus in action, this documentary film discusses how the organizational style of Orpheus is being used in local businesses.

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Holmgren, Erik. (2009). Creative Democracy. *Symphony Magazine*, Jul/Aug, pp. 78-83.

Symphony Magazine is a trade magazine for performing arts organizations. Based on experiences at the 2009 WorldBlu Live Conference, this article is a round table discussion about organizational democracy involving the Executive Director of Orpheus, the CEO of BZZ Agent, the founder and CEO of WorldBlu, and Dr. Erik Holmgren. The discussion revolves around a clear definition of organizational democracy, its successes, difficulties, and value in tough economic times.

Elfenbein, H.A., Lazar, J. & Grimm, L. (2007). Orpheus: The conductorless orchestra turns 35. Haas School of Business University of California Berkeley.

This brief case study provides an overview of the management and development of Orpheus from 1972 to 2007. Its primary focus is on the leadership of the orchestra, specifically on the founder, past and current directors, and the board.

Katzenbach, J. & Khan, Z. (2010). *Leading outside the lines: How to mobilize the informal organization, energize your team, and get better results*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

Chapter 3 of this book, 'Jumping Together', discusses the evolution the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and its rehearsal and management process. Katzenbach emphasizes the parallels between Orpheus with small business start-ups through a discussion of the development of formal systems of leadership that meet the goals of an organization.

Lehman, E. & Lee, F. (1997). *Determinants of Organizational Effectiveness: The case of chamber orchestras*. Harvard University, Kennedy School of Business.

Through an investigation of three different chamber orchestras, including Orpheus, this case study examines four main points: the differences between chamber orchestras and symphony orchestras, the critical issues facing chamber orchestras, the predictors of perceived effectiveness, and special opportunities and challenges facing each orchestra. Chamber orchestras are found to share similar challenges while at the same time having higher job satisfaction rates than traditional symphony orchestras. The case study is a comprehensive investigation into the challenges facing chamber orchestras at the time of its publication.

Lieber, Ron. (2000). Decisions Are in the Details. *Fast Company*, p. 296.
<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/34/orpheus3.html>

Lieber writes what is essentially a performance review of Susan Botti's piece "Within Darkness," premiered by Orpheus in 2000. Unlike other performance reviews, however, this piece focuses on the rehearsal process as it relates to the final 'flawless' performance of the work.

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Lieber, Ron (2000). "Leadership Ensemble." *Fast Company* 34, pp. 286-91.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/34/orpheus.html>

Written in 2000 this article offers an introduction to who Orpheus is and what makes them unique. Through an overview of the components of democratic leadership, the article shows how the Orpheus Process works for the Orchestra and the business community.

Miller, Allan (1997). *Orpheus in the Real World*. Documentary Film. New York, NY: Four Oaks Foundation.

This documentary film follows the 26 members of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, plus additional soloists, through the rehearsal and performing process.

Nielsen, Jeffrey. (2004). *The Myth of Leadership: Creating Leaderless Organizations*. California: Davies-Black Publishing, 2004.

The book offers a systematic deconstruction of traditional 'rank-based' leadership styles and discusses the advantage of the 'peer-based' system that Orpheus utilizes.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey. (2006). Why Employees Should Lead Themselves. *Business 2.0*, Jan/Feb, p. 78.

http://money.cnn.com/magazines/business2/business2_archive/2006/01/01/8368117/index.htm

Pfeffer's brief article highlights the advantages and disadvantages of rehearsing with the Orpheus Process. Drawing on a talk by Ronnie Bauch, a 40-year veteran of the orchestra, Pfeffer presents a balanced view of the work that Orpheus does.

Rehm, Robert. (1999) *People in Charge: Creating Self-Managing Workplaces*. Gloucestershire: Hawthorne Press.

This book offers a constructivist approach to creating democratic workplaces. Instead of talking about the advantages of democratic leadership styles, this book poses a series of questions and offers a step-by-step guide creating what Rehm calls 'Participative Design'.

Seifert, H. & Economy, P. (2001). *Leadership Ensemble: Lessons in Collaborative Management*. New York: Henry Holt/NY Times Books.

Harvey Seifert was the Executive Director of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra from 1997 until 2002. In this book he presents 8 principles by which an organization can work without a central authority figure.



Schweitzer, Vivien. (2006). Orpheus Goes to School. *Symphony Magazine*, pp. 38-41.

Schweitzer offers a brief synopsis the Orpheus Institute at the Manhattan School of Music. Students and faculty comment on their experiences with the Institute and the benefits and difficulties of working with the Orpheus Process.

Waldoff, Alice. (2001). A Special Harmony. *Commerce Insight*, Spring, pp. 6-7

A publication of the University of Illinois Business School, this article details an open rehearsal and Orpheus Process demonstration at the University in 2001.

Other Online Articles

- The New Yorker – “Passing The Baton: What CEO's Could Learn From the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra”
- OD (Organizational Development) Practitioner – “The Invisible Leader: Lessons for Leaders from the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra”
- Fast Company – "WorldBlu's List of Democratic Workplaces Will Make You Want to Work Someplace Else"
- Axiom News – "40 companies named to WorldBlu List of Most Democratic Workplaces"
- Incentive Magazine – "Equality At Work"
- Australian Financial Review – "Future Firms Will Go By the (Open) Book"
- Globe and Mail – "Democracy in action in the workplace"
- Symphony Magazine – "Creative Democracy"