

THE NOBLESVILLE SYMPHONY IN 3 MOVEMENTS

PART 2: What a Symphony Brings to a Community

There is no better indicator of the spiritual health of our city, its neighborhoods, and the larger region than the state of the arts. The arts deepen our understanding of the human spirit, extend our capacity to comprehend the lives of others, allow us to imagine a more just and humane world. Through their diversity of feeling, their variety of form, their multiplicity of inspiration, the arts make our culture richer and more reflective.

Jonathan Fanton, *President, MacArthur Foundation*

I think most of us can generally agree with the esthetic value of arts and culture in society; in this case, examining closely the reason for referencing this information -- the Noblesville Symphony Orchestra. But are there any real, concrete values that quantify this belief in the communal integrity of the arts? Can we ascribe economic outcomes as real values for having a symphony orchestra in one's community? Yes, I believe we can. But let's first take a look at the arts in general.

According to a recent Dun & Bradstreet¹ report on the creative industries (referenced in a 2008 report by Governor Mitch Daniels), growth of the businesses that comprise the creative industries was greater than the increase among the 14.3 million businesses tracked by Dun & Bradstreet. "The creative industries are the high octane fuel that drives the *information economy*, the fastest growing segment of the nation's economy."

Governor Daniels' report further states, in reference to Indiana, "As of January 2008, Indiana is home to 8,905 art-related businesses that employ 53,924 people. These arts-centric businesses play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. They employ people, spend money locally, generate government revenue, and are a cornerstone of tourism [in our state]."

The report further states, "the arts [also] play a significant role in Indiana's economic development. From major cities like Indianapolis and Fort Wayne to towns such as Lafayette and Rising Sun, the arts are a foundation of economic development, community revitalization, and historic preservation.

"Unlike most other industries, [the arts] leverage a significant amount of event-related spending by its audiences," states an *Americans for the Arts* report.² "For example, a patron attending a [symphony concert] may pay to park the car in a garage, purchase dinner at a restaurant, eat dessert after the [concert], and return home to pay a babysitter. This generates related commerce for local businesses such as restaurants, parking garages, hotels, and retail stores. Total event-related spending by nonprofit arts and culture audiences was an estimated \$103.1 billion in 2005. This spending supports \$3.1 million full-time jobs in the United States, provides \$46.9 billion in household income, and generates \$16.4 billion in government revenue.

This cause and effect is never more present than with the nations' symphony orchestras. According to a report by the *League of American Orchestras (the "League")*,³ "Orchestras, as an industry, helps drive the economic engine of their communities. They [not only] generate revenue, [but] keep [those] local "entertainment" dollars in the community, employing workers, earning income through tickets sales, ads and promotions, and recycling that income back into the community."

Looking at this comment from an economically backward perspective, when the San Francisco Symphony musicians went on strike in 1996, the loss [of income] rippled through the local economy. One downtown restaurant, Ivy's, closed because of customer loss due to the strike; even the San Francisco Opera House temporarily closed. According to Carol Piasante, a spokesperson for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, "The economic consequences of the Symphony's absence are an indication of their important cultural presence in the economic mix." ⁴

"Not only are orchestras a significant economic stimulus," says the League of American Orchestras in a recent economic impact study,⁵ "but in many localities they generate more income tax, sales tax, and other taxes for city and state governments than their direct appropriation. Few public investments, " the report continues, "generates such a high monetary return."

Orchestras contribute to their local economies in less tangible but no less important ways. We all understand that what drives businesses in their location (or relocation) decisions is the quality of the labor pool. Businesses typically locate where a skilled work force lives, or at least, says a recent economic impact report, in areas that can attract these workers. Skilled workers, indeed professionals on all levels, tend to locate where the amenities of life are close by.

It stands to reason, then, that "image" is a critical factor in a city's economic success. Communities depend on how residents and "outsiders" perceive the quality of life in a community. "Symphony orchestras...contribute personality and character to a city's image," the League's economic impact report continues. "The neighborhoods of New York City are often defined by the artistic institutions located within them. An orchestra helps a community to draw positive public attention from the press...that can contribute to the renewal of community image."

In the League's 62nd National Conference, the League's research department answered the following question regarding symphony orchestras:

"Why does a community support its orchestra? Orchestras are an important part of the community fabric. Communities with orchestras attract "super-citizen" volunteers, voters, philanthropists and other active, civic-minded participants. The presence of an orchestra is a strong indicator of a community's economic development. From a random 10-city survey, the

vast majority of citizens believe that the presence of a live, professional [orchestra] in the community...improves the quality of life, promotes understanding of other cultures, fosters pride in the community, [strengthens the economy], and contributes to the education and development of children.”⁶

Furthermore, “Orchestras are essential and active partners in increasing access to music education, improving the quality of life in their communities by collaborating with school systems and other local partners to deliver a wide array of education and community programs. Orchestras now offer more than 40 different kinds of programs, including: long-term partnerships with schools, after-school and summer camps, instrumental instruction, educational classes for seniors, and programs in hospitals and libraries.”

According to an Americans for the Arts report, “Longitudinal data of 25,000 students demonstrate that involvement in the arts is linked to higher academic performance, increased standardized test scores, more community service and lower drop-out rates. These cognitive and developmental benefits are reaped by students regardless of their socioeconomic status. The Dun & Bradstreet Report referenced by Governor Daniels substantiates all of these markers for Indiana students involved in music programs.

Communities that have a professional orchestra as a part of their cultural fabric reap many rewards, as the reports and studies in this article attest. We can validate, quantify, qualify and measure those rewards, but no words speak any finer to the reason for making music a part of our communal lives than these spoken by Boston Conservatory faculty member and director of the music division, Karl Paulnack, at a welcoming address to new freshmen and their parents:

I have come to understand that music is not a part of “arts and entertainment” as the newspaper section would have us believe. It’s not a luxury, a lavish thing that we fund from leftovers of our budgets, not a plaything or an amusement or a pass time. Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we cannot with our minds.

And, so, we look to the future of the Noblesville Symphony Orchestra with excitement, anticipation, and great expectation...

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REFERENCES:

¹ Dun & Bradstreet is considered to be one of the most, if not the most, comprehensive and trusted sources for business information in the United States.

² "Arts and Economic Prosperity III", summary, Americans for the Arts website, fall 2009 report

³ The League of American Orchestras is an association of U.S. and Canadian orchestras. Over 950 orchestras are members, including youth, community, and professional orchestras. Founded in 1942, and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League of American Orchestras leads, encourages, and supports America's orchestras while communicating to the public the value and importance of orchestras and the music they perform.

⁴ "Civic Center Slowdown", San Francisco Examiner, December 11, 1996.

⁵ "Show Them the Money! Calculating the Economic Impact of America's Orchestras", pg. 2, American Symphony Orchestra League article from their Resource Center.

⁶ "The Value of the Performing Arts in Ten Communities, Performing Arts Research Coalition, pg. 6, *ibid.*