Building a Community of Music in the South Coast

NBSO Strategic Plan 2012-16

Music brings people together. It is a powerful force that creates a bond between people and enriches our lives. Especially for children, music can make all the difference in the world. Over the next five years, the NBSO will continue building a community of music on the South Coast, bringing people together because of music.
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Executive Summary

Overview

This strategic planning process was designed to get to fundamental questions about classical music and the role of a symphony orchestra in a community. Classical music has a fascinating history as an art form and as a social and cultural experience. With respect to both the music itself and how it should be performed and experienced, there has been a wide range of evolving and disputed practices and views that can be traced for some 300 years.

Over the last 20 years, there has been a ferment in the classical music world as orchestras have searched for artistic vitality, cultural relevance, and financial sustainability. Task forces have been convened, reports have been issued, conferences and opinion pieces have proliferated. Much of this activity has been important and exciting, but after two decades it is clear that the American orchestra’s search for self-definition, relevance, and financial stability has not stopped. During this time, much has changed in the symphonic world, but much hasn’t. For many orchestras, there are still more questions than answers. This strategic plan is the attempt to find our answers.

The NBSO Vision

The New Bedford Symphony Orchestra makes music in ways that give all people the opportunity to enjoy classical music and define their own relationship to it. We see classical music as a living, creative art that has the power to delight, move and enrich everyone. Working with others, and always reaching out to new people, we are building a vibrant community of music in the South Coast.

Key Guiding Principles

1. For a symphony orchestra, everything begins with the music. How we view classical music in particular, and music in general, is therefore critical to our identity and our actions. This is how we view music:

   “Music expresses for us all the deepest, most intense yearnings of the soul – the poetry – mystery – the mad, intoxicated, impetuous singing of life. Music cares nothing for convention and the four walls of a concert hall. It is free, like a bird in the mountains – it is remote and untamed, like the wind and the waves far out in the ocean.” – Leopold Stokowski, Music for All of Us

2. We recognize and welcome the fact that our audience represents a broad range of people who like music, from individuals who are frequent classical music listeners, to some who listen occasionally, to those who are new to classical music. We believe that whether a person is familiar with a piece of music or not, it can be accessible and have a powerful impact on the listener. We therefore interact and build a relationship of trust and openness with our audience to facilitate a deep connection between music and listener.
3. The programming, venues and concert experiences we share with our audience, and the way we communicate with our audience – before, during and after concerts – are not bound by past practices, expectations, or conventional norms. What we do and how we do it is instead determined by why we do it: to play music and provide concert experiences that are meaningful, creative, moving and enjoyable to our audience.

4. Music is fundamental to being human and classical music is a rich and powerful kind of music that all people deserve the opportunity to explore. Our educational programs enhance the enjoyment of classical music for adults and make it a part of young people’s lives so they can experience its enriching, transforming power.

5. Our music director, musicians, guest artists and the living composers whose music we perform have a special place in the community of music we are building. Through their efforts music comes alive and touches us. We therefore give our audiences, both adults and children, a broad range of opportunities to know, interact with, and appreciate the individuals who make music with the NBSO.

**Key Strategic Priorities**

The strategic priorities identified in this report fall into four areas: (1) Artistic and Concert Experience, (2) Education, (3) Community, and (4) Financial Sustainability. The priorities are in many cases more generalized goals rather than specific programs or initiatives. This was necessary due to the budget uncertainties arising from current economic conditions, and because so much of what the plan calls for is uncharted territory of us. The latter consideration dictates a careful process of further outreach and deliberation with our stakeholders and constituents to translate our new direction and aspirations, under the guidance of our new vision and statement of principles, into meaningful, effective and sustainable initiatives. This process is currently underway and will continue under the supervision of the Planning Committee over the next four years.

1. Create a range of “gateways” and “bridges” through communication vehicles, events and concert elements that brings classical music to all people in accessible, meaningful ways.

2. Develop a family concert series and establish a matinee series of four classical concerts.

3. Develop a range of online educational options, including video, to introduce and enhance the experience of classical music to people of all ages.

4. Develop music education program for middle and high school students and explore other ways to bring classical music into their lives.

5. Broaden our dialogue with our audience, and with our potential audience, to better understand their perspective on music and the role a symphony orchestra can have in a community.

6. Develop additional opportunities to engage our music director, musicians, guest artists and contemporary composers in the community, both during concert weeks and at other times.
NBSO Facts

- A professional orchestra with a seven concert season and guest artists from around the world.
- Dozens of small ensemble performances every year throughout the South Coast.
- Partnerships with over 30 organizations, including the New Bedford Whaling Museum, Zeiterion Theater, UMass-Dartmouth, Buzzards Bay Musicfest, South Coast Chamber Music Society, Tri-County Symphonic Band, and more than 50 schools throughout the South Coast.
- Ticket revenue only covers one-third of the NBSO’s total operating budget of $800,000.
- It costs nearly $60,000 to put on a symphony concert.
- The NBSO spends over $200,000 a year on educational programs for children.

The NBSO Community of Music

There are 30,000 children participating in NBSO educational programs every year:

- Music in the Morning: children listening to classical music at the start of every school day
- SchoolsMusic!: an interactive concert by NBSO musicians in local schools
- Young People’s Concerts: students attending a special NBSO children’s concert at the Z
- Symphony Tales: an integrated music-early literacy program for beginner readers
- New Bedford Symphony Youth Orchestra: student musicians playing in four ensembles ranging from beginners to advanced
- Family Musical Connections: music curriculum and activities for families attending concerts
- Be Our Musical Guest: NBSO guest artists visiting local schools
- Master Classes: NBSO guest artists providing special instruction to young musicians
- School String Program: weekly lessons and ensemble playing in South Coast schools

Plus:

- Classical Coffee: short videos by conductor David MacKenzie that introduce the music and composers of upcoming concerts.
- Classical Connect: free tickets to low-income students, elderly and families.
- Random Acts of Music: a new initiative being developed consisting of specially designed “bridge” programs that introduce new people to classical music.
Background Information on Classical Music and the Symphony Orchestra

National Task Force for the American Orchestra (1993)

How can orchestras vary the concert experience in ways that are enriching, that expand the audiences for orchestral music, and that help to make the orchestra more viable and relevant to the broader community? The answer lies in the consideration of six factors that can enhance the total performance impact of the orchestra: (1) information, (2) communication with the audience, (3) the visual element, (4) the concert ritual, (5) the concert environment, and (6) the larger personal and social context.

The issue of the orchestra’s role in music education goes to the very heart of the orchestra’s mission in American musical life and in the larger society. The education question brings into sharp focus the extent to which the survival of the orchestra as an American institution depends on its successful integration into the larger goals of the community in which it operates - a broadly conceived, revitalized educational role for orchestras is a key ingredient in the transformation of declining or unstable American orchestras, as well as an imperative for all American orchestras if they are to continue as vital, flourishing institutional members of American communities.”

Music For All of Us by Leopold Stokowski (1943)

Music is a universal language – it speaks to everyone and is the birthright of all of us. It is no longer limited to privileged classes in cultural centers. This is as it should be, because music speaks to every man, woman, and child – high or low, rich or poor, happy or despairing – who is sensitive to its deep and powerful message. Not only is it universal as a language, but it is universal in its expression: it may be a children’s song, a soldiers’ march, a country dance, a simple folk melody – or it may be the highest and greatest in art music – its range of expression is without limit.

All art receives its inspiration from the same root – a passionately strong feeling for the poetry of life – for the beautiful, the mysterious, the romantic, the ecstatic, the loveliness of nature, the lovability of people, everything that excites us, everything that starts our imagination working, laughter, gaiety, “pretending” in the way that children do, strength, heroism, love, and tenderness.

Music is the most intimate and direct of all language. Some of us are born to be sensitive to music – others find it difficult to understand at first, but after a time they become responsive to its message, and their whole life is enriched by music – a new source of joy and understanding gives to them an enlarged meaning to life.

Henry Higginson, Founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1889)

Why is the hall so crowded? Why do so many listeners of all ages sit on the steps and stand in the aisles each week and each year? They do not come there to please our conductor or me. They do not come twenty miles to show their good clothes. They come to hear the music. You and I know that very
well. That audience is not from the Back Bay or from any particular set of people. They are town folks and country folks, and they come to hear the music.

_Theodore Thomas (organized concerts in Central Park in 1868; founding conductor of Chicago Symphony Orchestra)_

Throughout my life, my aim has been to make good music popular, and it now appears that I have only done the public justice in believing, and acting constantly on the belief, that the people would enjoy and support the best in art when continually set before them in a clear and intelligent manner.

_Classical Music in America – A History, by Joseph Horowitz (2005)_

In one way, Thomas achieved his mission of uplift, of educating and elevating audiences toward pure sermons in tones, but many listeners fell by the wayside in the process. His credo that “the people will enjoy and support the best in art when continually set before them in a clear and intelligent manner” was not sounded in Chicago, where he faced audiences made restless even by Beethoven, with complaints that his programs were too formidable, that too many seats were empty. He replied that “to those who cannot enjoy the great music, poor fellows, I do not grudge what they can enjoy … I will play for them now and then, but it is not for Tell Overture and Handel Largo that Chicago supports my orchestra. One does not buy a Krupp cannon to shoot sparrows.”

_Bela Fleck’s Classical Turn_

In Sunday’s (1/8/12) _Birmingham News_ (Alabama), Michael Huebner writes, “Bluegrass banjo player Bela Fleck has been veering ever closer to the classical world for the past several years. In some ways, that is his destiny. His father, once an aspiring opera singer, named him Bela Anton Leos Fleck, after Bartok, Webern and Janacek, three giants of early 20th century music. Fleck’s album, ‘Perpetual Motion,’ won Grammys in 2002 for Best Classical Crossover Album and Best Arrangements for his collaboration with violinist Joshua Bell, percussionist Evelyn Glennie, guitarist John Williams, mandolinist Chris Thile, bassist and album producer Edgar Meyer, and others. Tracks included music by Debussy, Scarlatti, Bach, Brahms, Chopin and Beethoven. In September, Fleck’s Banjo Concerto, the first large-scale classical work composed entirely by his hand, was premiered in Nashville. Giancarlo Guerrero conducted the Nashville Symphony and Fleck soloed. On Thursday, Fleck will go through the rigors in front of the orchestra again, this time with the Alabama Symphony. Fawzi Haimor will conduct the ASO in a Classical Edge concert at the Alys Stephens Center. … Composed in conventional three-movement form, the concerto reflects Fleck’s three-decade career, which has taken him from his beloved bluegrass to the music of India and Africa, in addition to classical.”

_Can performances in unexpected places strengthen new music’s impact?_

Thursday (1/5/12) on NewMusicBox.com, Alexandra Gardner writes, “A thoughtful blog post by composer Daniel Wolf addressing the concept of ‘public’ spaces (which, as he points out, are not
actually as accessible as one might suppose) has got my brain churning about musical performance in unrestricted places. By that, I mean the sort of place where unsuspecting folks would happen upon a musical performance (or whatever sort of performance) and pause to check it out, or run away screaming, or... well something. ... As much as I enjoy attending concerts in the sorts of venues where one would expect to hear music, the delight that buskers and street performances can provide makes me hope that even more composers will take advantage of the possibilities of music making in communal spaces. Although it is not a new idea, it hasn’t been widely implemented, despite the successes of works that have fared well in such a context. Recent examples include Lisa Bielawa’s *Chance Encounter*, which has been presented in multiple locations, John Luther Adams’s *Inuksuit* which has enjoyed both indoor and outdoor performances, and composer James Holt’s recent presentation of *Thruleine*, in which cellists performed the Prelude from J.S. Bach’s Suite No. 1 in G major on every Coney Island bound F-train subway platform.”

*This is Your Brain on Music* by Daniel J. Levitin

The appreciation of music is intimately related to our ability to learn the underlying structure of the music – the equivalent of grammar in spoken or signed language – and to be able to make predictions about what will come next. A schema is a general notion of what to expect. Our brain begins forming musical schemas when we are still in the womb and they are elaborated, amended and otherwise informed every time we listen to music. Our musical schema for Western music includes implicit knowledge of the scales that are normally used.

By age five children have learned to recognize chord progressions in the music of their culture. We develop schemas for particular musical genres and styles. Style is another word for repetition. Schemas are an extension of memory. Music listening requires that we be able to hold in memory a knowledge of those notes that have just gone by, alongside a knowledge of all other music we are familiar with that approximate the style of what we’re listening to now. This latter memory may not have the same level of resolution or vividness as notes we’ve just heard, but it is necessary in order to establish a context for the notes we’re hearing.

*The Great Transformation of Music Taste* by William Weber

For most of the 18th century, organizing a concert was a collegial undertaking among musicians that involved selecting a miscellaneous variety of opera pieces, concertos, cantatas and symphonies. Usually only one movement of a work would be performed. Between 1800 and 1850 European musical life underwent a fundamental transformation in values, practices, repertoires and institutions. In 1807 the Leipzig Gewandhaus broke with tradition and programmed in its entirety Beethoven 3rd symphony and performed it as the only work after intermission. During this time principles of musical idealism emerged that called for (1) serious demeanor during performances, (2) respect for the integral work of art, (3) vesting authority over musical taste within musical classics, (4) a hierarchical ordering of genres and tastes, and (5) the expectation that listeners learn about great works to understand them appropriately.
By the mid-1840s a common language of idealistic musical values had taken root in the major musical cities of Europe. An average member of the music public would be familiar with these ideas and be influenced by them, but also feel a disconnection with the traditional tastes and assumptions that he or she had grown up with. There was a nagging uncertainty about just what allegiance to “classical” music meant.

A fundamental change occurred in concert life when professional orchestras moved to the center of musical life. Their concerts evolved into civic institutions that became central to city life and to their nation. By the 1860s their concerts had achieved wide influence over taste, education, and criticism, giving them an authority within musical culture equal to opera. But there were tensions between playing the “classics” of the Mozart-Beethoven-Mendelssohn era and works by living composers. After 1848, the percentages of performing dead composers continued to rise, reaching 74% to 85% by 1870. A compromise of sorts was eventually reached that balanced the programming of those works with new works by living composers such as Wagner, Liszt, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky and Brahms.

The grandeur of the golden age of classical music in the second half of the 19th century was deeply shaken by a crisis that erupted over new music in the decade prior to World War I. After 1900 a suspicion of new music emerged among the classical music public. Many warned that the public found new works an insufferable burden. In 1913 a Leipzig magazine asked, “So you want even more modern music? Haven’t we had enough already? Isn’t it clear that as soon as a conductor brings on a new piece, the hall empties out immediately, and that is the best way to scare people off?”


Influential music critic John Sullivan Dwight was a Unitarian minister before joining the Transcendentalist Brook Farm community in 1841. He saw classical music as something sacred, as “elevating and purifying.” He viewed some of Beethoven’s adagios as “almost the very essence of prayer – not formal prayer, I grant, but earnest, deep, unspeakable aspiration.” He viewed Beethoven’s symphonies as a source of moral instruction, the embodiment of ethical striving. Dwight waged a campaign to “sacralize” classical music to distinguish it from mere “popular” music.

After the Golden Age by Kenneth Hamilton

Beethoven’s piano sonatas were not written for public concerts. In the 1830s single movements of some sonatas were performed at private soirees and the first public concert of the full Moonlight sonata was by Mendelssohn in 1832. In the 1830s a concert consisting of a full Hummel concerto with two other shorter pieces was thought “too severe” by some. When all movements of a work were performed at a concert, lighter pieces were often played in between to give the audience a break.
By the 1880s the practice of solo piano concerts were fairly well established. In 1884 Anton Rubenstein and von Bulow were giving long “educational” concerts that lasted up to 3 hours long and tried the patience of audiences. As more “masterworks” were presented, the greater the expectation that the audience should sit through all the movements of them and behave more like a contemplative gathering of connoisseurs than a lively assembly of socialites on pleasure bent.

1782 Letter from Mozart to his Father

These concertos [Nos. 11, 12, and 13] are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are passages here and there from which the connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why …

Listen to This by Alex Ross, music critic for The New Yorker

In the nineteenth century, German musicians often described their art in idealistic terms, as a lofty pursuit above the crowd. E.T.A. Hoffman in an essay on Beethoven, asked the public, “What if it is entirely your fault that the composer’s language is clear to the initiated but not to you?” … [On the other hand,] Verdi said that “The box office is the proper thermometer of success…. You have to be wall-eyed, with one eye on the public and one on art.”

Comments and Suggestions on the Strategic Vision and Principles

To gather input during our strategic planning process, we reached out to NBSO guest artists and some classical music authors to share the draft community of music vision, the quote about music by Leopold Stokowski, and the three fundamental questions we asked ourselves about classical music and the role of the symphony orchestra in a community (how meaningful, creative and alive can a symphony orchestra’s artistic vision and concert experiences be to people today, how much impact can a symphony orchestra have in the lives of children, and how important can a symphony orchestra be to a community?) Here are their responses:

Roberto Plano NBSO guest artist and 2001 First Prize Winner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition: Your strategic framework makes it very clear that the purpose of your orchestra is not just giving concerts, but bringing music to the whole community, which is unbelievably right. Perhaps you should speak about the reactions of soloists like me that had the opportunity to share your vision and to be amazed at what you do. The video of my school visit has been watched by so many people in Italy that now know that the New Bedford Symphony is an example to follow.

Martina Filjak, NBSO guest artist and 2009 First Prize Winner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition: I would consider the following options: (1) emphasize the influence of music education on the lives of children and explore connections of musicians playing in the orchestra and their activities in music education and schools; (2) what benefits and options do sponsors and donors actually get by supporting the orchestra – they should be more involved with the orchestra, the musicians, and the community; and (3) attract new audiences with unorthodox and “new” things that raise the exposure of the orchestra and its activities.
Joseph Horowitz (author of *Classical Music in the United States – A history*; and *The Post-Classical Predicament*; former music critic for New York Times and past artistic director of Brooklyn Philharmonic, currently artistic director for the Post-Classical Ensemble and artistic advisor to the Pacific Symphony): In general, I believe that orchestras must redefine themselves as humanities and education institutions, and integrate "education" into the mainstream of their programming. I believe all programming should be thematic and as inter-disciplinary as possible, facilitating collaboration with schools, universities, museums, film, theater, etc. They should foster communication and cultural community in the broadest sense. It can be done.

Marina Lomazov, pianist, NBSO guest artist: While I cannot add much to what are some really vital and important points you bring up, I thought you might be interested in these articles if you haven't read them yet (enclosed). I am completely in agreement with you about re-thinking of the traditional role of the symphony orchestra in the community, which goes beyond just performing vast musical repertoire to being a leader and center for cultural education and development.

Mark Kaplan, violinist, NBSO guest artist: I think what you sent is a great introductory page. It articulates all the biggest ideas and ideals very well. Only two comments: 1. The three questions in the last paragraph: I would suggest replacing "a symphony orchestra" with "The New Bedford Symphony Orchestra." That's for two reasons. First is to make the discussion of those questions somewhat more specific – If you do this, there is a nice progression from the completely idealistic and general quote from Stokowski, to the Vision statement of the NBSO (still idealistic but at also about a particular orchestra with some particular goals) to the 3 questions, which ask for more specific answers. (This relates a bit to point 2 below.) Second is that of course the answers to those questions are very much dependent on the specifics of the community and the orchestra involved, so in some sense there really aren't answers to those questions when they are posed in the general sense about any orchestra and any community. 2. Some people are going to love this page, but some, depending on their personality, are going to see it as too lofty and abstract. For those people, the reaction may just be, "Huh?" Or if they happen to be people with a cynical streak, they may read it and think, "OK, so when is he going to ask for a check, and how much?" Of course you want to be connecting with these people too, and the key may be how you present this page to them, and/or how you make the transition from this page to more concrete and specific points.

William Weber (author of *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms*): Having been a music critic on and off (Harvard Crimson in the 60s, the LA Times in the 70s) taught me more about music history, past or present, than any course on that subject. I'm intrigued with your program, sensing how you blend serving the public with leading the public, that crucial balance a music executive has to shape.

Your program with the schools strikes me to a particular extent, since, as you know so well, the ageing of the classical-music audience is such a deep problem. I doubt many orchestras have been able to do much in this regard; you clearly have found ways to convince the schools and the foundations to go in this crucial direction. I'm also interested in your inclusion of a fairly recent work in most programs, indeed one by a woman, while giving information on the composers and reassuring your subscribers about this part of the programming. For my part, I'm glad to see how strong the modernistic Long Beach Opera here has developed recently, finally drawing a public from Los Angeles.

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The Adagietto from the Mahler 5 with the German Requiem! As I suggested, individual movements are valid works in their own terms. Perhaps you could mention this aspect briefly in reference to the "new ways" you suggest in the second paragraph, since potential subscribers might want specifics. By the same token, you might bring back the word "paradigm" somewhere in the body of your text, suggesting that you are following a paradigm which is increasingly followed successfully among orchestras of the more forward-looking kind nationally. The quote by Leopold Stokowski is wonderful, setting the stage for what you propose to do. I must take a look at his book.

**Paul Cienniwa, harpsichordist, NBSO guest artist:** This is very impressive (and I thank you that it's only one page!) Aside from general awe at the clarity of the document, I am left to wonder if the organization understands that this is something more than just being a symphony orchestra. That is, the vision of the NBSO appears to extend quite beyond that. The vibrant "community of music" is much larger than an orchestra.

**Janice Weber, pianist, NBSO guest artist:** The framework looks really good. These are cosmic questions so in some way maybe unanswerable but it is important to try. I think holding the discussion points to three is good. Be sure that the order you discuss them is right. The Stokowski quote is wonderful.
Building a Community of Music in the South Coast

Strategic Plan 2012–2016

Music brings people together. It is a powerful force that creates a bond between people and enriches our lives. Especially for children, music can make all the difference in the world. Over the next five years, the NBSO will continue building a community of music on the South Coast, bringing people together because of music.

Introduction

This strategic planning process was designed to get to fundamental questions about classical music and the role of a symphony orchestra in a community. Classical music has a fascinating history as an art form and as a social and cultural experience. With respect to both the music itself and how it should be performed and experienced, there has been a wide range of evolving and disputed practices and views that can be traced for some 300 years.

To understand classical music and the symphony orchestra today, it is helpful to go back about twenty years, when, in response to concerns about declining and aging audiences, downward subscription trends, perennial funding shortfalls and the seeming irrelevance of symphony orchestras and classical music to contemporary culture, the “Report of the National Task Force for the American Orchestra: An Initiative for Change” was released. Subtitled “Americanizing the American Orchestra,” the report promulgated a new vision for the American orchestra that contained six overarching goals (in addition to the bedrock commitment to artistic excellence): (1) a repertoire that reflects an American identity, (2) embracing the diversity and vibrancy of the racial and cultural groups that comprise American society as a whole, and each orchestra’s community in particular, (3) finding ways to incorporate musicians as partners in decision-making and programming, (4) serving a variety of cultural, educational and social needs in its community, (5) being alert to the need to cultivate a love of music in the younger generation, and (6) having an organizational structure that responds to changes in order to secure its future.

Reflecting on the report a few years after its publication, classical music critic Joseph Horowitz described it as calling “for substantial and systemic change embracing repertoire, format, and the relationship to the community. [As a result, there are now] a plethora of reports on new tactics for audience building, for music education, for transforming the concert experience. Some proposed strategies seem desperate or expedient, [but] the search is authentic, not cynical.”

This search was continued in 2008 with the Orchestra Forum’s “Elephant Task Force” report which called for new visions of the symphony orchestra. The report identified four areas that could re-define the American orchestra: (1) Community Relationships: The ability of the orchestra organization to connect meaningfully to its community and create true public value, (2) Internal Culture: The ability of orchestra constituents to work together in mutually supportive and cooperative ways, (3) Artistic
Activities: The ability of the orchestra to deploy artistic resources broadly, and effectively in service of the art form, the community, and individuals in the organization, and (4) Financial Structure: The ability of the orchestra to match cash resources with expenditures either to maintain the status quo or to achieve financial viability or financial robustness.

A comparison of these two reports shows that the American orchestra’s search for self-definition, relevance, and financial stability has not stopped. During this time, much has changed in the symphonic world, but much hasn’t. For many orchestras, there are still more questions than answers. This strategic plan is the attempt to find our answers.

**Strategic Paradigm**

For a symphony orchestra, everything begins with the music. How a symphony orchestra views classical music in particular and music in general is therefore critical to its identity and its actions. This is how the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra views music:

> “Music expresses for us all the deepest, most intense yearnings of the soul – the poetry – mystery – the mad, intoxicated, impetuous singing of life. Music cares nothing for convention and the four walls of a concert hall. It is free, like a bird in the mountains – it is remote and untamed, like the wind and the waves far out in the ocean.”
>  
> – Leopold Stokowski, *Music for All of Us*

What would an orchestra look like that deeply believed and put into practice this view of music? If music, including classical music, is truly for all of us, and constitutes such an integral and fundamental part of what it means to be human, then a symphony orchestra would recognize the special place it has in a community and the need to share the music it makes with people of all ages in a way that is meaningful and alive to them. If music does not care about convention and concert halls, a symphony orchestra would learn from the past without being bound by it, and be open and sensitive to the social and cultural milieu of today.

These observations made us realize that it was necessary to ask ourselves three specific, big questions:

1. How meaningful, creative and alive can a symphony orchestra’s artistic vision and concert experiences be to people today?
2. How much impact can a symphony orchestra have in the lives of children?
3. How important can a symphony orchestra be to a community?

From what you will read in the following pages, we hope that you agree with us that the overarching answer to these questions is, “*more than you would ever imagine.*”
The NBSO Vision

The New Bedford Symphony Orchestra makes music in ways that give all people the opportunity to enjoy classical music and define their own relationship to it. We see classical music as a living, creative art that has the power to delight, move and enrich everyone. Working with others and always reaching out to new people, we are building a vibrant community of music in the South Coast.

The NBSO Mission

The mission of the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra is to place the world’s finest symphonic music at the center of the cultural life of the South Coast and to work with others to bring classical and other music into the lives of everyone in our community. We enrich the lives of adults and children through the transforming power of great music. We present passionate and engaging concerts at the highest level of professional standards and provide educational programs for people of all ages that deepen their enjoyment of music and make it a part of their daily lives.

Principles

This strategic planning process focused as much on articulating the spirit in which we do things as on determining what things we would do. The following statement of principles in the three areas of Artistic and Concert Experience, Education and Community capture that spirit and provide guidance for the implementation of our strategic priorities and future decision-making.

Artistic and Concert Experience Statement of Principles

1. Classical music is a diverse and fascinating world of beauty, emotion and pleasure. Our artistic programming will therefore mix masterworks, lesser known works of the past, American music, and works by contemporary composers that will allow audiences to explore and enjoy the breadth and richness of this world.

2. We recognize and welcome the fact that our audience is threefold: individuals who are frequent classical music listeners, those who listen occasionally, and some who are new to classical music. We believe that whether a person is familiar with a piece of music or not, it can be accessible and have a powerful impact on the listener. We therefore interact and build a relationship of trust and openness with our audience to facilitate a deep connection between music and listener.

3. The programming, venues and concert experiences we share with our audience, and the way we communicate with our audience – before, during and after concerts – are not bound by past practices, expectations, or conventional norms. What we do and how we do it is instead determined by why we do it: to play music and provide concert experiences that are meaningful, creative, moving and enjoyable to our audience.

4. The orchestra and smaller ensembles will perform with an artistic sensitivity and technical mastery that will engage, impress, and move our audience.
Education Statement of Principles

1. Music is fundamental to being human and classical music is a rich and powerful kind of music that all people deserve the opportunity to explore. Our educational programs enhance the enjoyment of classical music for adults and make it a part of young people’s lives so they can experience its enriching, transforming power.

2. Our educational programs are designed to have a deep and enduring impact on children and adults that goes beyond the experience of simply hearing classical music. The music performance and its framework for understanding will meet high standards of artistic quality and give participants the opportunity to connect with our musicians as individuals.

3. The content of educational programs for children will be integrated so as to build from past learning to new and will authentically connect concepts across academic curriculum frameworks and young people’s life experiences. Programs will include opportunities for young people and their families to have affordable access to NBSO performances.

4. We will champion the importance of arts education, especially music education in schools, by providing support and model programs for schools to assist them in developing robust arts and music programs for students.

Community Statement of Principles

1. Community means what we have in common, and music is something that all people can share. It is a powerful force that creates a bond between people and enriches our lives. We bring people together in a community of music.

2. Collaboration is an essential part of community life. We will partner with other music, arts, cultural, and educational organizations to champion the arts in South Coast communities and present collaborative music, arts and cultural programs.

3. Open communication with our audience, partners, and others is essential to true community. We will respond to the needs of the community and create relationships that allow us to broaden the range of music and concert experiences in the South Coast.

4. Our music director, musicians, guest artists and the living composers whose music we perform have a special place in the community of music we are building. Through their efforts music comes alive and touches us. We therefore give our audiences, both adults and children, a broad range of opportunities to know, interact with, and appreciate the individuals who make music with the NBSO.

Operational Values and Statement of Principles

It is one thing to believe deeply in something, it is another to successfully put that belief into practice. Through the strategic planning process, key operational values came to the forefront and guided us in our thinking and decision-making. As an organization, we concluded that practical wisdom, inspired creativity, strategic collaboration, financial sustainability and constant assessment and improvement would be the touchstones of our efforts to build a community of music in the South Coast.
1. We combine inspired creativity with practical wisdom because together they create a deliberative dynamic that produces initiatives and solutions that are high-impact and enduring.

2. We seek out strategic collaborations as they are avenues for mission-enhancing relationships that generate creative energy and contribute to each party’s ability to achieve their strategic vision.

3. We carefully manage our growth and design programs and initiatives so that they are financially sustainable. Our financial planning includes adequate capitalization to manage our operational and strategic risk.

4. We systematically assess and work to improve everything we do.

**Initiatives**

**Artistic and Concert Experience Initiatives**

1. Create a range of “gateways” and “bridges” through communication vehicles, events and concert elements that brings classical music to all people in accessible, meaningful ways.

2. Seek out opportunities for solo, small ensemble and orchestral performances at various venues, including surprising and unexpected places.

3. Develop new concert experiences and enhance concert facilities.

4. Develop a family concert series.

5. Establish a matinee series of four classical concerts.

6. Develop a stable high-quality choral group for NBSO performances either by creating our own or developing relationships with one or more choruses.

7. Continue to develop the artistic quality of the orchestra through strategies of compensation, recruitment, consistent personnel, and professional artistic operations.

8. Prepare for NBSO centennial in 2015, possibly involving a concert that reflects the ancestry and culture of New Bedford.

**Educational Initiatives**

1. Develop a range of online educational options, including video, to introduce and enhance the experience of classical music to people of all ages.

2. Develop a music education program for middle school students and explore other ways to bring classical music into the lives of middle school students.

3. Develop a music education program for high school students and explore other ways to bring classical music into the lives of high school students.
4. Expand the youth orchestra program for a full complement of instruments on all levels. Increase performance opportunities and enhance educational experiences for music students.

5. Continue integration of Young People’s Concerts with other school programs to enhance its reach and impact.

6. Ensure the overall quality of Music in the Morning and develop enhancements for the program.

7. Increase funding and the amount of awards for the Lillian Lamoureux Music Education Scholarship.

8. Provide adequate administrative support and coordination for educational programs.

Community Initiatives

1. Broaden our dialogue with our audience, and with our potential audience, to better understand their perspective on music and the role a symphony orchestra can have in a community.

2. Develop additional opportunities to engage our music director, musicians, guest artists and contemporary composers in the community, both during concert weeks and at other times.

3. Expand our partnerships with other organizations for the purpose of expanding the audiences and communities touched by music.

4. Make the NBSO centennial a celebration for the whole community.

Snapshots of the Present and Future

*Where are we now and what will our strategic principles and initiatives make us look like in the future? Something like this ...*

The Present: Artistic Excellence, Education, Collaboration, Community

NBSO audiences find themselves listening to an orchestra of increasing artistic sensitivity and technical mastery, with a music director and musicians intent on sharing the passion and excitement they feel in the music. NBSO audiences are made up of people who know each other: long-time friends, new friends, friendly faces of the people who have been sitting nearby all season, musicians who say hello during intermission and at after-concert receptions.

At a SchoolsMusic! program, three NBSO musicians are playing music and interacting with students. The program is designed to both teach young people about music and reinforce academic subjects such as literacy and math. The energy in the room is inspiring. Not only are the students learning, but they are engaged and having fun with classical music.

The students hear some of this music again, played by the full NBSO orchestra, when they attend the NBSO Young People’s Concerts, and they come across it again in the NBSO’s Music in the Morning
program, which brings classical music into the lives of children every day of the school year. All told, 30,000 children a year experience NBSO music programs, which also include school visits by NBSO guest artists, a youth orchestra, a string instruction program, master classes and Symphony Tales, a music program for beginner readers that integrates early literacy principles.

We live in Classical South Coast, a project coordinated by the NBSO to promote partnerships, collaborations, and networking among musicians and music groups in the area. South Coast music lovers who know about an NBSO concert also learn about upcoming concerts by the South Coast Chamber Music Society, the Tri-County Symphonic Band, the Buzzards Bay Musicfest, the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth Music Department, and a host of other music groups in the area. That’s because the NBSO believes the more music, the better.

The Future: A Vibrant Community of Music in the South Coast

In the future, Saturday night will not be the only time to hear the NBSO at the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center. Audiences will have the choice of attending Sunday matinees.

The NBSO’s remarkable artistic growth will also continue, as we want to answer the question, “Just how good can the New Bedford Symphony be?” We think our answer will impress our growing audience.

Music doesn’t belong just in the concert hall. It belongs on street corners, in parks, on farms, in people’s homes, in art galleries and museums, and in schools, churches, offices, and factories. And music belongs in all the communities of the South Coast. The NBSO will seek out more and more places that can be musical places. Expect the unexpected.

Imagine a Saturday afternoon, when a family with young children, perhaps joined by grandparents, is going to hear the NBSO perform a family concert. Maybe it will be at Halloween and the children will be in costumes, listening to Mussorgsky’s A Night on Bald Mountain, and then Grieg’s In the Hall of the Mountain King. Imagine a weekend in spring, after getting their faces painted with flowers in the Z lobby, the same family listens to Copland’s Appalachian Spring and a movement from Beethoven’s “Pastoral” Symphony No. 6.

How much music should children have in their lives? Should it depend on what neighborhood, town, or city they live in, or how much money their parents earn? Every child should be able to hear a live performance of a symphony orchestra. Every child should have musicians visit their school. Every child who wants to take music lessons should be able to do so. To make this happen, the NBSO’s music education programs will be a deeper and more prominent presence in South Coast communities.

Collaboration makes us all stronger. It also makes our community stronger. The NBSO will expand its partnerships with music groups like the South Coast Chamber Music Society, the Tri-County Symphonic Band, the Buzzards Bay Musicfest, and the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth Music
Department. We will strengthen and expand our relationships with other key partners such as the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center, the New Bedford Whaling Museum, AHA!, and the City of New Bedford. We will reach out beyond South Coast to new partners to build relationships that substantively advance the strategic visions of all and advance our own mission to place the world’s finest symphonic music at the center of the cultural life of the South Coast.

Appendix A: The Financial Sustainability of NBSO

Financial Sustainability Statement of Principles

1. At least 40% of operating expenses should be covered by ticket sales and other earned income.

2. The annual budget should designate funds to build a capitalization fund that will ultimately be adequate to cover the operational and strategic risks of the organization.

3. Grants and foundation gifts should cover 6-8% of the budget on an annual basis, with additional grants sought for special projects.

4. The core of our philanthropic funding should come from repeating, annual support from subscribers and other donors, including the growth of Symphony Circle giving ($1,000+).

5. Support from the business community should cover 8-10% of the budget on an annual basis.

Financial Sustainability Initiatives

1. Continue to develop staff, trustees, and advisors capacity to achieve organizational goals.

2. Bring marketing, fund raising and events budget resources into alignment with organizational goals.


4. Use smaller orchestra concerts to build audience and assess feasibility and best timing of introduction of matinees.

5. Increase subscriber base to 1100 subscriptions and the Symphony Circle to at least 150 members.

6. Set aside the initial amount of $50,000 for the operational and strategic risk capitalization fund.
Appendix B: Implementation

NBSO Strategic Priorities by Year

ACE = Artistic and Concert Experience  
E = Education  
C = Community  
FS = Financial Sustainability

Year 1:

ACE: Create a range of “gateways” and “bridges” through communication vehicles, events and concert elements that brings classical music to all people in accessible, meaningful ways.

ACE: Seek out opportunities for solo and small ensemble groups to perform at various venues, including surprising and unexpected places.

ACE: Explore new concert experiences and enhance concert facilities as much as possible.

ACE: Continue to develop the artistic quality of the orchestra through strategies of compensation, recruitment, consistent personnel, and professional artistic operations.

E: Develop a range of online educational options, including video, to introduce and enhance the experience of classical music to people of all ages.

E: Ensure the overall quality of Music in the Morning and develop enhancements for the program.

E: Expand the youth orchestra program for a full complement of instruments on all levels. Increase performance opportunities and enhance educational experiences for music students.

E: Provide adequate administrative support and coordination for educational programs.

C: Open a dialogue with our audience, and with our potential audience, to better understand their perspective on music and the role a symphony orchestra can have in a community.

C: Develop additional opportunities to engage our music director, musicians, guest artists and contemporary composers in the community, both during concert weeks and at other times.

FS: Continue to develop staff, trustees, and advisors capacity to achieve organizational goals.

FS: Maximize net income from Holiday Pops concerts.

FS: Use smaller orchestra concerts to build audience and assess feasibility and best timing of introduction of matinees.
Year 2:

ACE: Develop a stable high quality choral group for NBSO performances either by creating our own or developing relationships with one or more choruses.

ACE: Prepare for NBSO centennial in 2015, possibly involving a concert that reflects the ancestry and culture of New Bedford.

E: Develop a music education program for middle school students and thus, explore ways to bring classical music into the lives of middle school students with regularity.

E: Assess the Young People’s Concerts to determine whether the program could be enhanced or, alternatively, re-invented to increase its reach and impact.

E: Increase funding and the amount of awards for the Lillian Lamoureux Music Education Scholarship.

C: Expand our partnerships with other organizations for the purpose of expanding the audiences and communities touched by music.

C: Make the NBSO centennial a celebration for the whole community.

FS: Bring marketing, fund raising and events budget resources into alignment with organizational goals.

FS: Increase subscriber base to 1100 subscriptions and the Symphony Circle to at least 150 members.

Years 3-4:

ACE: Develop a matinee series of four classical concerts.

ACE: Develop a family concert series.

E: Develop a music education program for high school students and thus, explore ways to bring classical music into the lives of high school students with regularity.

FS: Move to setting aside the initial amount of $50,000 for the operational and strategic risk capitalization fund.