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MANAGING ART: A CASE STUDY OF A SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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The administrative director of a Swedish symphony orchestra contacted the authors in their capacities as consultants to obtain professional help regarding various problems in the orchestra. The primary reason for this contact was that the working climate, which had been quite bad for a long time, had deteriorated even more. There were frequent conflicts between the chief conductor and members of the orchestra. The orchestra had recently returned from a successful international tour, although the journey had been marred by internal conflicts and differences of opinion about, for example, the repertoire. After its return, the musicians felt little motivation. One week after their arrival a serious controversy arose between the orchestra and a guest conductor.

Other signs of malfunction in the orchestra were frequent late arrivals, dubious sick leaves, a low threshold of irritation during rehearsals, and a tendency for the musicians to accept other engagements. Many of the musicians also felt that the joy of playing and solidarity among them had diminished to a critical level. Among the musicians there was also strong dissatisfaction with the management due to what they regarded as a lack of forcefulness in decision-making, unsatisfactory personnel facilities, choice of programs, low salaries etc.

A few months after we had begun to work with the orchestra and the management, the administrative staff also expressed a need for help. It was evident that they did not receive enough support from the management, and that their work went unappreciated, while the women complained of discrimination regarding advancement, as compared to the men. Many of the women felt suspicious and insecure in their relationships with their colleagues. The problems of the administrative staff appeared to be less concrete and more emotional than those of the orchestra.

The administrative staff accepted our offer to take part in a study involving repeated measurements of attitudes and interviews, as well as consultation regarding their work situation. Thus, this part of the study had an ulterior motive other than consultation, i.e., to understand and acquire knowledge about what happens in an administrative group with is responsible for administering a primary task it cannot perform itself, and to compare this staff group with other administrative staff groups in similar situation (Boalt Boëthius, 1983; Wrangsjö & Boalt Boëthius, 1987).

GENERAL STRATEGY OF THE CONSULTATION

The organizational development work lasted about 18 months. We dealt with the orchestra and the administration separately, even when our work with the management affected both the orchestra and the administration. We started with the orchestra and held meetings with representatives of the orchestra management in small groups. We regarded this as the only way to get to know the people in

the orchestra, as there was a great deal of suspicion and reluctance to take part in anything that the management had initiated.

The aim of these meetings was to prepare a one-day conference for the orchestra in order to examine their work situation and relationships with the management. Problems previously summarized by planning groups were discussed. Almost all members of the orchestra were present. New work groups were formed to find solutions and design ways of dealing with inherent problems. After ten months of quite active work on the part of the orchestra, a second one-day conference took place, in order to present the solutions that had been readied so far and continue focusing on unsolved problems.

The organizational development work with the administrative staff followed the same general pattern, but only a single one-day conference was held. As compared to the orchestra, however, it was much more difficult to gain a good understanding of how the administrative staff felt about their work and about each other. Systematic attitude data were collected in order to acquire information as to how the administrative staff perceived each other, the management and their work. Semi-structured questionnaires where a person writes down issues he/she is concerned about, combined with interviews were used (Wheel Questionnaire, Shalit, 1982). The results of this analysis are reported in a separate study (Boalt Boethius and Wrangsjö, 1982).

In addition to the above-mentioned groups, i.e., orchestra, administrative staff and management, a fourth group was included in the study, but only to a limited degree. During our work with the orchestra, it became evident that the governing board had a potentially important role in the organization. The members of the board agreed to take part by providing data concerning their attitudes towards the organization as such and their work situation. The same type of semi-structured questionnaire as for the administrative staff was used.

After another 18 months, a follow-up study of the orchestra, administration and management was carried out. The aim was to determine the degree to which previous problems had been solved and observe changes in attitudes towards their work and other groups, including the management.

As consultants we had slightly different backgrounds. One of us had more experience with respect to consulting in large organizations and the other had more experience working with musicians.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Every organization has its own history and process of development, and knowledge of this background facilitates an understanding of how the organization functions today. The origins of the organization presented in this paper date back to the beginning of this century, when an association was founded to take responsibility for the orchestra. The orchestra became successful and acquired high status under the leadership of a governing board, which financed the orchestra through sponsors, and acquired well-known, forceful conductors with a strong influence on the choice of programs and working conditions.

The orchestra played in inadequate concert halls for a long time. A new concert hall was built in the 1920's. A special foundation was set up to administer the hall and cover its costs. The two organizations - the orchestra, including activities related to its concerts, and the foundation which administered the concert hall - worked separately, each with its own governing board and administration. As of 1950, they were united in a practical, but not an organizational sense, under the same leader. The man who combined the jobs of managing director and musical director was an important figure in music, as he also conducted a choir associated with concert activities. During his lifetime he became a legend due to his ability to create a stimulating and vital atmosphere. In 1976, both organizations the orchestra and the foundation - were united formally and a managing director was appointed.

After the two organizations merged, the former orchestra administration grew and changed. Once a small family business led by a patriarchal and extremely charismatic leader, the organization turned into a middle-sized company with a more emotionally distant management. The changes in leadership and size as well as the new managing director had a strong impact on the members of the administrative staff, who felt that they had lost their foothold in relation to the director. This was especially hard on the employees who had belonged to the orchestra administration for a long time. They had started young, without any formal training, had been enthusiastic about their work, were paid low salaries and had a feeling of belonging based on a shared, strong interest in music. They missed the daily attention that had been bestowed on them earlier, which they did not receive in the new organization. This seemed particularly evident in the female staff who had become increasingly insecure about the value of the work they performed. They felt surpassed by younger, more recently employed, mainly male colleagues who in general had better formal training and also received higher salaries.

GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

The orchestra consisted of about 100 musicians. A symphony orchestra may be regarded as a work group divided into parts which are well defined in terms of tasks and their place in the organization. A symphony orchestra consists of three sections: string, wind and percussion. Less common instruments such as a harp, piano, etc., can be added. The string section contains first and second violin, viola, cello, and double bass sections. The string section thus constitutes a string quintet where each part is reinforced by more than one musician playing the same instrument. The wind instruments consist of two main groups - the woodwinds and the brass. The parts vary not only in terms of instruments such as flute, oboe, trumpet, etc. but also within each type of instrument. There can be a "first" and "second" oboe, a "first" and "second" trumpet, etc. In general there are two to four parts for each instrument. In contrast to the string section, each individual woodwind part consists of only one person, mainly because the wind instruments have a stronger tone than the string instruments. The percussion section consists of a varying number of instruments, such as timpani, drums and cymbals.

The management was headed by the managing director who was responsible for the orchestra and overall administration. He held ultimate responsibility for the artistic work, although there was also a program committee, which functioned in an advisory capacity. (This type of leadership is different as compared with that in many other countries, where the conductor, and not the managing director, is responsible for artistic leadership.) The management group consisted of five persons: the managing director, the administrative director, the head of the information department, the planning director and the orchestra manager. The last two functions had originally been combined in one job, that of orchestra director, but the man who had held this position had found it too difficult to combine them. The new function of orchestra manager had been set up mainly in order to handle matters related to the musicians and their work situation. There was a certain amount of mutual dissatisfaction within the group which was not talked about. The managing director was regarded as having difficulty delegating tasks and the organization of work in the group was not clear. Advantages of this system were some degree of freedom and room for initiatives although there was rivalry with respect to some tasks, while other were not dealt with efficiently. The administrative staff consisted of about 40 persons. The central administration was headed by an administrative director who was responsible for both the well being of the staff and financial matters; he was also assistant managing director. A planning director was responsible for contacts with agencies, conductors, guest artists, contracts and so on. The orchestra manager handled contacts with the musicians and was responsible for their working conditions. The staff was divided into five functional units spread throughout the building, which made communication and cooperation more difficult than was necessary. The ticket office, located by itself on the first floor, was a fairly unified group of six persons. They had a feeling of cohesion although their work situation was stressful. All functions related to secretarial work, salaries, bookkeeping, etc., were located on the top floor. The people who worked there did not think of themselves as a group, but they were a group and as such a highly privileged one in the eyes of the other employees. The negative effects of the previously combined unit were most obvious in this

group. These effects included insecurity, a low degree of cooperation and low job satisfaction. The information office consisted of four persons. This group was characterized by internal conflicts, due mainly to constant overwork and difficulties in delegating tasks with the group. This unit served the orchestra and was responsible for the business aspects of renting the hall. The office was criticized by the orchestra for not spending more time on marketing orchestra performances. The library was run by a fairly isolated group, which consisted of the librarian and some archivists who were knowledgeable about music but had rather special personalities. No group cohesion seemed to have developed within this group and each employee worked individually without much contact with the others. The library was supposed to supply music in due time, before the orchestra started to rehearse a new production. Inability to accomplish this caused quite a problem in the orchestra particularly for the string parts which have to have markings for the bowing provided by the conductor or the string principal. The librarian had earlier belonged to the management group, but the composition and functions of this group had been changed.

The technical staff responsible for sound, lighting and the podium, could be considered a fifth group. Their work was directly linked to the performances of the orchestra and it was obvious that they felt closer to the orchestra than the administration. As many others in the administration, they thought they received too little support from the management, but did not worry about this as long as their work with the orchestra functioned.

Some members of the governing board were politically appointed. Two came from music organizations and three were representatives of the employees' trade unions. The managing director and the administrative director also took part in board meetings. The orchestra did not think the board knew enough about the matters it dealt with. This has also been confirmed in other studies (Engle, 1985). Analysis of attitude data indicated that the way the work of the board was organized did not allow for any real discussion, which meant that new members never had time to learn very much about the orchestra and the concert hall. They were initially interested and wanted to contribute, but lost their initiative and enthusiasm because they could not find means of solving their dilemma from inside the board.

Future plans and the artistic programs of the orchestra were handled by a program committee. The committee consisted of the managing director, the planning director, representatives of the orchestra, the leader of the choir and a composer. Informally the committee also collaborated with the chief conductor.

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORGANIZATION

The symphony orchestra and our organizational development work are described in the following, mainly in terms of three theoretical concepts related to the Tavistock conference model (Rioch, 1977). These are the primary task of the organization, leadership functions and intergroup relations (Menzies, 1970; Rice, 1969). Other hypotheses and concepts which are equally important for the consultation, but not focused on in this report due to the lack of space, include containing capacity, projections, boundary control, and work group and basic assumptions activity (Bion 1961; Lawrence, 1979; Miller and Rice, 1967; Rioch, 1964).

Primary Task

Orchestra. The process of becoming a musician and membership in a large symphony orchestra require considerable musical talent and long formal training, in general about five years' academic instruction (Stångberg, 1984). Motivation to "play music" has to be very strong and gratification from experiencing the total synchronization of a symphonic orchestra has to be substantial enough to counteract the more stressful aspects of the work situation (Schuller, 1985; Wallin 1977).

Many of the musicians had belonged to the orchestra under study for 20 to 30 years. Numerous changes have occurred over time. Young musicians are often technically more skilled than their older colleagues, who have had years of experience and routine. The time available for developing one's own skills decreases when a musician plays in an orchestra on a regular basis, as opposed to young musicians who have had time to concentrate on their own development. Manners and customs have changed in the sense that there is less respect for authority. The older musicians experienced a lack of respect from many younger colleagues; they were not greeted in a way they were accustomed to, etc. Recruitment of musicians and the demands on them have also changed. Nowadays it does not suffice to be a skilled musician; cooperation is also a significant factor. The ability to adapt to other musicians who belong to same section of the orchestra is becoming increasingly important. This was reflected in discussions about the possibility of interviews as a complement to traditional auditions.

During a period of time prior to our consultation, the orchestra did not appear to have held the same attraction for musicians as it had earlier. Other chamber orchestras and smaller groups had developed throughout the country - all potential rivals. This implied that many musicians had divided loyalties and some of them often went on leave of absence. Many substitutes in an orchestra are frustrating for the faithful retainers and further diminish the attraction of an orchestra. Frequent substitution may also decrease the quality of performances as it affects the joy of playing, involvement and job satisfaction if it takes on excessively large proportions.

The orchestra is led by a chief conductor who is responsible for a fixed number of concerts per year, leads the orchestra on tours, etc. In between, the orchestra is led by guest conductors who are contracted for special productions. As giving concerts is the life and joy of the musicians, the choice of conductor is extremely important. An inspiring conductor generates exhilaration and "all the problems in the world dissolve and vanish." The result of the work of an orchestra is intense mutual interaction where every sign and every tone are interpreted and integrated. But if a conductor is not easy to work with, problems otherwise endured become insufferable, e.g., low salaries, difficulties in communication, etc. (Salmiries, 1986; Wallin, 1977).

Most conductors, even if they are quite good, are seldom in a position to contract the best conductors for a guest performance, let alone as chief conductors. The orchestra wanted the management to act more firmly in regard to this matter, while the management felt the orchestra did not understand the extent of the difficulties involved in engaging such celebrities. The problem is not primarily money, even if it is important. A conductor prefers to be in contact with a limited number of orchestras, i.e., those with which he feels inclined to develop cooperation. It is difficult for an orchestra to "enter the market" (Wallin, 1977). Administration. The task of the administration is to make appropriate arrangements for the orchestra to give concerts, i.e., handle financial operations, distribute information about concerts, and other activities, sell tickets, etc.

The administrative staff belonged to a somewhat different professional sphere than the musicians. However, the administrative staff and the members of the orchestra did not live in totally different worlds. The management and others in the administration had good musical training and a profound interest in music, but not the high level of competence to perform the kind of music necessary to become members of the orchestra. A common denominator for the members of the administrative staff was their deep interest and love of music. Many of them could not imagine themselves working in any other area.

Dynamic Aspects of the Primary Task

Orchestra. One of the main factors which influences how people function in relation to each other in a work situation is the kind of work an individual or group performs. The type of work a group or an organization has to perform in order to survive and develop, the primary task of the group, gives rise to characteristic ways of thinking, feeling and acting which can be generalized to aspects of the situation not directly linked to performance (Rice, 1969).

One aspect regarding the primary task of a symphony orchestra is that musicians on the elite level are in general trained to work individually. Many of them dream of a career as a soloist; this is also the aim of their professional training, although it can be questioned. Their careers are tough, to say the least. Musicians in a well-known symphony orchestra were often the most talented children in their part of the world, admitted to academy of music after intense competition; then they advance or are given an opportunity for a solo performance. The length of this period depends on the individual instrument, the size of the orchestra, etc.

Another important factor is the amount of stress in a symphony orchestra (Theorell, 1987; Salmimies, 1986; Wallin, 1977). Several studies have shown that the greatest stress lies in the psychological tension before a difficult passage. It has also been pointed out that musicians experience constant pressure not to make many mistakes. Any mistake that occurs becomes very public, as it is observed by a number of colleagues, and there are always people in the audience who will hear everything. The general level of stress experienced due to demands on total synchronization is also considerable, particularly when there are many conflicts in the orchestra (Salmimies, 1986; Wallin, 1977). The main factor which counteracts stress is the intense satisfaction experienced when a performance is successful. A long period of successful concerts can even compensate for quite poor working conditions. Then, when something happens which results in a poor performance, the general feeling is one of disaster, underlying conflicts, etc., are suddenly exposed, and the blame is projected on the conductor or management or both.

It is not difficult to imagine that musicians in a symphony orchestra are extremely dependent on the conductor and each other. This dependency is mutual for everyone involved and when total synchronization is accomplished, the experience of having succeeded is regarded as almost unbelievable. Here the term "in search of excellence" is appropriate - excellence which can be shared with the audience.

When the demands on synchronization are not met, the musicians become irritated and frustrated. In Bion's (1961) terms, a state characterized by fight-flight behavior is a common reaction. Phenomena such as late arrival, absence, lack of decent contracts, etc. can be seen as flight behavior. Frequent unproductive quarrels, attacks on other musicians or sections of the orchestra, the conductor or other persons and groups outside the orchestra such as the administration can be regarded as expressions of fight behavior.

The search for the perfect solution - a new world-famous conductor who would be able to activate and stimulate the orchestra to perform as the musicians know it could with the "right" conductor - may be considered a pairing assumption.

Administration. From a strictly organizational point of view, the management group comprised an informal group of four men who worked most closely together. A formal management group would have included the librarian as well as the head of the ticket office.

The most obvious characteristic of the administrative staff was the extreme dependency exhibited by some of the staff members on the administrative director and the managing director. We got the impression that some of this dependency was a defense against not receiving enough personal reassurance regarding their work. A lack of stimulation in their work was also evident. Other employees, who were most closely linked to the orchestra such as technicians and podium staff, did their work without much interaction with the management. In terms of the history of the staff and actual working conditions, this was to be expected.

Two Styles of Leadership - Orchestra. The organization of the orchestra and the administration was to a large extent influenced by their leaders. Both groups shared the same administrative leader although the orchestra also had its own leader, a conductor for each concert production. The work situations of these two leaders were very different. Conductors are often guest conductors who work with the

orchestra for a short time, often only a week. Meetings between the orchestra and the conductor are intense and directly linked to the primary task of the orchestra - to play music. The aim is to produce a high quality concert in a few days' time. The relationship to management extends over a longer period of time and, for obvious reasons, is less intense. Meetings between the orchestra and the management deal mainly with everyday, often boring and complicated prerequisites for playing music. A metaphor used during the consultation was that the relationship to the conductor can be described as a short and intensive love affair, while the relationship to management resembles a marriage of convenience. The leadership styles of both conductors and managing directors can vary considerably. A conductor should have the ability to attract attention, fill the music with life, make creative interpretations and, during rehearsals and concerts, demand absolute cooperation from the orchestra. The conductor has an authoritarian leadership role that probably lacks a counterpart in democratic societies. This leadership is exerted, however, with the orchestra's approval. If complaints arise, they would concern a lack of firmness on the part of the conductor. In addition to the conductor, there are other leadership functions in a symphony orchestra. Every part in the orchestra has its own principal, who is often the soloist in his section and responsible for the development of the section. New musicians are trained in their individual group within the orchestra. Each part has specific characteristics based on the instruments played and its place in the orchestra. Principals are the models in their groups, whether or not they want to or are aware of it (Wallin, 1977).

The most important principal is the concert master, who is responsible for the first violins, the strings and the whole orchestra's relationship to the conductor and vice versa. The role of the concert master can be described as a buffer between the conductor and the orchestra. To a certain extent the concert master and the principals can be characterized as middle-level management.

Two Styles of Leadership - Administration. The leadership exerted by the administration staff was quite different, although some of the staff had experienced something similar when the staff had been small and led by its former managing director. The present management was more inclined to negotiate and work towards mutual agreements and democratic codetermination according to laws and regulation. The leadership styles of the managing director and the conductor are functional due to their respective prerequisites. However, it may be confusing to be alternately exposed to them if the different conditions are not made absolutely clear and kept separate. Theoretically, both leadership roles were distinct. Even if the entire management had received good formal training as musicians, they were never expected to work with the orchestra the way the conductor did. If any role diffusion occurred, it was because the conductor was tempted to enter the role of managing director. This was especially apt to happen to the chief conductor who had a certain amount of responsibility for the development of the orchestra.

Dynamic aspects of leadership functions

Many musicians complained about the conductor as well as the managing director and his co-workers. The conductor was regarded as having a difficult technique during rehearsals. For instance, he tended to repeat extremely short passages, a few bars, so that the musicians lost the context. It was also felt that he did not have enough distance to the musicians on a personal level, which many of them found embarrassing. The administrative leaders were considered rather passive. They made promises and decisions, but lacked the strength to make them work. They were also accused of not providing enough information about future plans, etc. Even if some complaints were exaggerated, others seemed to have realistic reasons.

It was also evident that the orchestra's working conditions were not structured enough, especially in regard to the principals of the different sections. They were not used to taking initiative and responsibility on behalf of their parts. If some of them tried to do so, they received very little support from other principals.

One aspect of leadership is that a leader should be able to contain anxiety, above all the kind of anxiety linked to the primary task of the organization. In a symphony orchestra there is constant pressure to perform at a very high level, which gives rise to a considerable amount of stress. The conductor has to be able to handle the intense emotional communication inherent in a concert performance. A similar capacity for containing anxiety is also acquired by other persons with leadership functions, such as the concert master and the principals. They have to understand and contain the reactions which are specific to their sections while relating to the other sections of the orchestra as well as the conductor (Wallin, 1977).

A good conductor can do almost anything as long as he has a mutual understanding with the orchestra, which is essential in order to create constructive tension.

This implies a strong charismatic feature in the relationship between the group and its leader (Wallin, 1977). All this contributes to a wide range of projections both within and outside the orchestra. The managing director of a symphony orchestra has to balance the needs of and demands on the orchestra with those of the administrative staff. He also has to take responsibility for the repertoire and the audience as well as the finances of the whole organization, and survive in a creative way - by no means an easy task.

Intergroup Relations

Orchestra. The main intergroup relationships in an orchestra are linked to its organization. The different parts of a symphony orchestra form subgroups depending on the kind of instrument played. As mentioned above, the three main sections are wind, percussion and strings. The wind and percussion groups are responsible for their own parts, even if they often play in unison. They take part in fewer productions than the string instruments and therefore have more time to prepare, etc. A musician who plays alone is more exposed, although he also has opportunities to feel significant and even invaluable. There are informal subgroups among the wind instruments which the others often regard as somewhat self-sufficient. The string players are different. There are few superordinate positions in this section and the possibilities of advancing are very limited. Most orchestra musicians who belong to the string section are tutti musicians and will remain so. In one sense they may feel that they can be replaced more easily than wind instrumentalists. They work more days per year and play more continuously than the other musicians (Wallin, 1977).

A specific type of intergroup problem is related to marking the bowings for the strings prepared by the string principal. Most of the music is provided by the library; sometimes it is rented or a guest brings his own material. Most productions require two to three days of rehearsal. When the orchestra comes together for the first rehearsal, the string parts should be ready and coordinated between the principals of the string section. If the library has not delivered the music on time, this lack of coordination implies that the rehearsal has to be interrupted. The string musicians become confused when they have to mark in the bowing on the spot. The wind instrumentalists grow irritated because they have nothing to do while waiting for the string section to mark the bowing, and a tense atmosphere develops. This strained atmosphere increases the tendency to be sarcastic and critical towards each other for instance when somebody makes a mistake. This augments the stress which a musician in a symphony orchestra usually experiences due to strong self-criticism, so that the joy of playing and solidarity with the others disappear.

Administration. The administration consisted roughly of five groups, although many people worked on their own.. As a result, only a few of them felt they had any particular links to other colleagues. An effort of establish a few more unified work groups had not succeeded very well, with the exception of the ticket office. Many members of the administrative staff did not trust each other or the management enough to try to establish smaller work groups, which could function as buffers in relation to the administrative director. It seemed as if they were too frustrated even to want to try. There were several reasons for this function. One was that many staff members felt neglected in comparison to the

musicians. Another was that their work tended to be the focal point of their lives, which was felt more deeply the older they became. Moreover, many of them had very low self esteem and lacked the courage to ask for opportunities to develop themselves professionally and personally.

Dynamic aspects of intergroup relations

One of the major intergroup problems in the orchestra was that there were built-in conflicts between the different instrumental sections and within each instrumental section. Smooth cooperation is a prerequisite for good work. As compared to other organizations in society, few can compete with a symphony orchestra regarding the total synchronization required between all parts of the orchestra and the conductor. Considering this reality, it is not surprising that the orchestra sometimes found the administrative functions slow and insufficiently coordinated.

In general, many of the administrative employees tended to seek support from the administrative director. An effort to strengthen group cohesion in the existent work groups and thus ease the pressure on the management had failed. The administrative director was responsible for the finances of the organization and also served as personnel manager for the administrative staff. These two tasks were often regarded as conflicting and the administrative director was clearly overwhelmed by constant demands to take better care of the staff. Due to a fairly weak financial situation, he concentrated mainly on economic matters and his work with the orchestra. He spent less time working with the administrative staff than they felt was necessary. As a result, many people found him distant and lacking in empathy. Although it seemed easier to come in contact with the managing director, the staff felt he was weak at times and slow to make firm decisions and implement them. The management as a whole received many negative projections. This was to some extent due to the loss of their former leader, whose "soul" was still very much alive in the organization. But there was also a great deal of anger and frustration among the administrative staff; they not only felt ignored, but also that their working capacity was not recognized.

Strong feelings of ambivalence are activated in any organization where the work of one group consists of administration in relation to another group, whose primary task cannot be performed by the administrative group itself. This influenced the administration of the orchestra in the same way as it affects administrations of research institutions, hospitals and other settings where the work is performed primarily by high-level professionals. This was expressed as feelings of admiration and, exclusion as well as sentiments of envy. Members of the orchestra also expressed irritation, a lack of understanding as to the nature of their role in the primary task and, at times a certain amount of contempt for the administrators.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION

The general aim of the consultation was to analyze the problems of the organization as presented above and collaborate with the various groups to find ways of dealing with and eventually solving these problems. Through initial contacts while planning the conferences with the orchestra and the administrative staff, we gradually gained a better understanding of some of the major dynamics in the two groups - the orchestra and the administration. We focused on three areas of interest: (a) the primary task of the organization, (b) leadership dynamics, and (c) intergroup relations. The strategies we used in the organizational development work were to:

- (1) improve communication among individuals and groups in both the orchestra and the administration as well as among these two groups and management;
- (2) increase understanding of the different functions and roles various groups and individuals performed in the organization;

(3) promote greater concentration on work tasks and functions which require cooperation as opposed to what was described as "fixation on bad relationships;" and to

(4) interrupt "vicious circles" in order to increase enthusiasm and identification with the organization.

The first of these four strategies implied that the consultation should lead to an increase in interaction among musicians who belong to the same section of the orchestra. This concerned, for example, people who sat close to each other in the same part of the orchestra, but had not talked to each other for years, members of the administrative staff who had avoided each other or felt that they had been slandered, etc., who were encouraged to try to approach each other.

The second strategy implied an analysis of existing and potential subgroups in order to identify subgroups that could buffer the strong dependence on the management. Another way was to promote a better understanding of leadership functions, especially on the middle management level, and their significance for the performance of the group as a whole. In the case of the orchestra, this implied a focus on the roles of the principals as leaders of the different sections in the orchestra and an increase in understanding of the dynamics of the projections.

The third strategy concerned the need for more knowledge about the kind of work performed by individual employees in the administration in order to comprehend how the different units of the administration contributed to the primary task of the organization as a whole. This understanding was particularly important in the case of the administrative staff so as to help individual staff member take things less personally and stop interpreting so much of what happened in terms of poor relations. As for the orchestra, it was important to increase their knowledge of the work actually carried out by the administration.

The fourth strategy implied working with specific relationships that were described more or less as "vicious circles" in order to promote enthusiasm for and identification with the organization.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The organizational development work can be described as a process where collection and evaluation of written information, attitude data and interviews concerning the organization were interwoven with efforts to make changes. The design of the consultation is summarized below. A detailed description of the consultation process is reported separately (Wrangsjö & Boalt Boëthius, 1987).

During the two one-day conferences with the orchestra, we worked interchangeably with a large group - about 100 persons - consisting of all the musicians, some members of the administrative staff and management, as well as small groups of about ten persons each. The first conference focused mainly on motivating people to talk about how they experienced their work and their relations to each other and to link these experiences to the underlying dynamic principles which governed the work of the orchestra. The general design of this procedure was adapted to the aims described above. The small groups were headed by members of the orchestra who had shown some interest in the project and wanted to contribute to bringing about a change. During the first conference, each small group consisted of people from different parts of the orchestra and one member of the administrative staff.

A survey of the questions discussed by the groups revealed four main areas:

(1) work with the orchestra: the concert master, section principals, auditions, appointments, rehearsals, leaves of absence and substitutes, placement on the podium, trade union matters, relationships and attitudes;

(2) repertoire and planning;

(3) leadership in regard to the orchestra; and

(4) the profile of the organization in relation to the general public.

As these points were discussed, those who were interested in continuing to deliberate these issues were assigned to work groups. These groups met for some months, were in contact with different sections of the orchestra and the consultants and wrote reports which were circulated among the orchestra for feedback. A general meeting was held to evaluate suggestions and results. At this meeting it was evident that some matters had actually been solved, while others remained unsolved. The second conference focused on the unsolved matters. As these mainly concerned the climate in the different sections of the orchestra, the smaller groups had been set up to highlight this problem. The groups responsible for planning the second conference had questioned whether or not it was advisable to work with the actual sections and parts of the orchestra intact. Some were afraid that too few musicians would show up, while others feared that the individual musicians who were regarded as having difficulties in their relationships would feel attacked, so the situation might have become even worse. However, this did not happen, and people were amazed at the things they could talk about. The general impression was that the major problems could be tackled. The discussions were summarized and circulated to the orchestra and those members of the administrative staff who had participated. The administration, in collaboration with representatives of the orchestra, agreed to continue working on various decisions - for instance, a training program for the principals. This completed our work with the orchestra.

As already mentioned, our work with the administration was in many ways more difficult than our efforts regarding the orchestra. We found it difficult to work with representatives of the various units. It was obvious that they did not trust each other and no one received a mandate from the group he or she represented. The first phase of our work consisted of trying to help the representatives identify their problems. Initially our main impression was that many persons expressed vague dissatisfaction which was difficult to translate into words. The process of making these problems comprehensible and helping the administrators to communicate with each other and with the management was the starting point for what developed into a one-day conference with the administrative staff. The most important issues were:

(1) the need for a personnel manager;

(2) male dominance;

(3) opportunities for further professional training and personal development;

(4) scape-goating; (5) lack of openness, which has led to misunderstandings; and (6) inconsistency on the part of members of the management, which has led to suspicion among the staff and a poor working environment. During the organizational development work with the administration, it became obvious that many members of the staff felt neglected. We interpreted the intensity of negative feelings towards the management and towards each other partly in terms of projections of feelings they could not contain themselves and partly in terms of their work situation. A metaphor used in the beginning, which turned out to be quite appropriate, was that the whole organization could be compared to a circus. The orchestra performs in the center ring. The spotlights focus on the musicians. The lights are in their eyes and they cannot see very much of what goes on outside the ring, but they can appreciate what goes on around themselves, and they can hear the applause. The others stand around the ring. They lean on the railing, admiring those who perform in the center, thinking quietly: I wish I could do that too. The group in the ring that does not see very much of what happens outside is the orchestra, while the group closest to the railing represents the administrators in leading positions. Behind them are the rest of the staff, pressing hard to get closer. They cannot really see what goes on in the middle, even if they are proud of their fine circus. They know that the group (the orchestra) would not be able to function without people like themselves who are in the

background. Meanwhile, all interest is naturally focused on those who perform, so that the people standing in the back rows do not feel recognized by either the orchestra or the management. They can only see the backs of the management and they regard themselves as much worse off than the orchestra which, among other things, has two (generally devoted) leaders. FOLLOW-UP About 18 months after the consultation had been completed, a follow-up was carried out. It consisted of some meetings with the management, administrative staff and representatives of the orchestra. The impression of the orchestra was that their work situation had improved considerably. There was a new chief conductor who was very demanding, but well liked and respected. The orchestra made a record which had been extremely well received by international reviewers. Most of the issues that had been discussed during the conferences were more or less solved. Contacts with the leaders of the different sections had continued and principals seemed to have a better understanding of their roles, new personnel facilities had been set up, etc.

Administrative changes had also occurred. A new managing director had been appointed in accordance with plans drawn up before we started our work. There had been many conflicts in the management and several people had left the organization. At the time of the follow-up, the management group had changed. The managing director was definitely the head of the organization, and his closest co-worker was a new administrative director. The management group consisted of the leaders of the formal work units in the organization. The main purpose of this group was to provide information and serve as a potential for feedback. Changes had also taken place among the rest of the staff; some had left due to retirement, while others had switched units and assumed new tasks.

The administrative staff volunteered to take part in a new collection of data concerning theft attitudes towards their work, the work group and the management. This was much easier as compared to the first time and only a few people did not participate. The results indicate that their attitudes towards their work were fairly positive, about the same level as at the beginning of the consultation. It was interesting to note that the work groups were in general regarded as more positive than previously, while the management was found to be either fairly good or quite poor. Those who liked clear-cut decisions and had no need for contact or support were satisfied, while other employees would have preferred more contact and opportunities to interact with the management.

DISCUSSION

The task of this symposium is to examine how the model for Group Relations Conferences and associated concepts can contribute to the understanding of social and political issues. In regard to the applicability of the conference model (Lawrence, 1979; Rioch, 1977), it seems to us that a symphony orchestra is well suited for an analysis in terms of this model. As an organization, it contains many features which are fairly easy to understand and recognize after having worked in group relations conferences. Some characteristic features are the distinct leadership exerted by the conductor and the functional division into sections (the parts of the orchestra) with almost unique demands on synchronization. Another important aspect which characterizes the work of an orchestra is the intense fluctuation between concentration and deep satisfaction when a concert is successful and feelings of failure in connection with a poor performance. The whole organization can be described as existing in a more or less constant state of tension, which is reminiscent of conferences. All performing arts are characterized by a balance between the need to develop new ideas, the curiosity and stress involved in constant re-examination, and maintenance of necessary routines and structures which function as a base for creative work. The demands on the conductor to coordinate all activity in the orchestra and contain the anxiety, which arises during rehearsals and concerts are obvious.

As part of the organization, the orchestra administration is quite interesting because it contains so many of the characteristics we are used to finding in other organizations, such as hospitals, social welfare bureaus, industries, etc. However, due to association with the orchestra, these characteristics tend to be more pronounced. Leadership functions are less clear, the work units are less well defined and the demands for coordination are low.

The requirements on the managing director to manage the orchestra with its high demands, and be responsible for the administration with its needs for support, create a difficult dilemma. Many orchestras have experienced this and one of the few solutions that has been recommended is that the relationship between the managing director and the administrative director should be stable and allow for frequent contact. This relationship can be compared with that of a director and assistant director of a conference, where the impact of their working relationship on a good conference can be easily confirmed.

Similarly, the governing board of an orchestra can be compared to the type of organization responsible for a conference. If the board is knowledgeable about its task, maintains boundaries between the conference and the board, etc., it is easier to hold a good conference. Finally, the idea of the primary task as a task an organization has to manage in order to survive cannot be more relevant than in the case reported here.

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