

## Chapter 2

# Lawrence Tarlow, Principal Librarian, New York Philharmonic\*

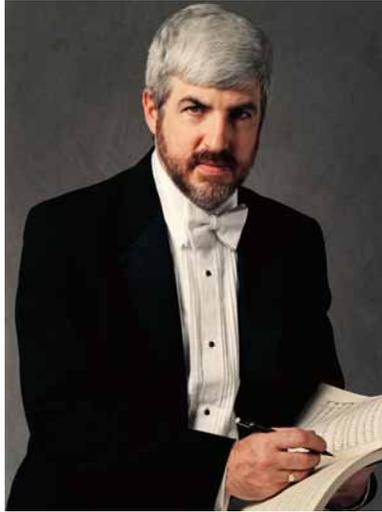


Photo 1. Official Orchestra Portrait of Lawrence Tarlow.

Founded by American conductor Ureli Corelli Hill in 1842, the New York Philharmonic (NYP) is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States. The NYP is one of the “Big Five” American orchestras and has attracted some of

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Stories and Lessons from the World’s Leading Opera, Orchestra Librarians, and Music Archivists, Volume 1: North and South America, 19–35



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the world's most legendary conductors to serve as its music directors, including: Gustav Mahler, Arturo Toscanini, Bruno Walter, Leonard Bernstein, George Szell, Pierre Boulez, Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, and Jaap van Zweden. The NYP gave its record-setting 14,000th concert in December 2004.

In addition to serving as the current Principal Librarian of the NYP, Lawrence Tarlow is also a three-term past president of MOLA: An Association of Music Performance Librarians. In the following interview, Tarlow summarizes his decades of experience in serving the NYP, in addition to sharing with the readers his early memory of falling in love with the work of orchestral librarianship as a teenager.

*Please introduce yourself and tell about your professional training and education background.*

LT: My name is Lawrence Tarlow. I was born in Great Neck, New York, and grew up in Roslyn. I have been serving as the Principal Librarian of the NYP since August 1985. In terms of my formal training in music, I went to a local public school until the age of 17, but I was also attending the programs of the Pre-College Division of The Juilliard School<sup>1</sup> from age 15 to 17, majoring in tuba. At Juilliard, I was a student of Joseph Novotny, former Principal Tuba of the NYP. After graduating from high school, I went to the Curtis Institute of Music<sup>2</sup> in Philadelphia from 1970 to 1974 to further my music education as a tuba major. At Curtis, I was a student of Abe Torchinsky and Paul Krzywicki, each of whom had served as the Principal Tuba of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Following two seasons spent in music publishing, I again attended The Juilliard School as a tuba major for one season.

With regard to professional training, there is no course of study for an aspiring orchestra or ensemble librarian. We are, for the most part, autodidacts – self-taught – who learn on the job. Conservatory studies of music theory, counterpoint, and solfège were helpful, but score reading is something I had to learn on my own. Music copying (I started long before computer engraving programs) was something I'd been doing since age 15 – making arrangements of existing works to play with friends – and that was again self-taught.

*What is your earliest musical memory?*

LT: At age six, I put a tambourine between my knees in music class and played it like a bongo drum. The first piece of music I fell in love with was Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. My parents had a recording, and to this day when I hear the work, I expect the music to skip just where that recording did.

*How did you get into orchestra library work as a teenager?*

LT: I was probably 15 years old then, but I made an orchestra in my bedroom by hanging from the ceiling the names of different music instruments – imagining where they would be sitting in the orchestra. I would be sitting in the middle of my bedroom, listening to a recording conducting my own my imaginary orchestra.

Basically, I taught myself to read a score and understand the structure of a full orchestra by starting with music of the classical era. Music of the classical era is

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<sup>1</sup>The Juilliard School. Available at: <https://www.juilliard.edu/>

<sup>2</sup>The Curtis Institute of Music. Available at: <https://www.curtis.edu/>

usually not so complicated because the first violins play most of the melodic line. The woodwind instruments toss the melody around or play harmony. The horns are playing with the woodwinds and the trumpets and timpani are playing only certain notes for emphasis. The top line of the score is the flutes, followed by the oboes (we refer to this as “score order”) and at the bottom of the score is the double bass. The difference between a full orchestra score and a piano score is that a piano score is a two- or three-line condensed score where everything is in piano notation. With a piano score, you don’t always know what instruments are playing, but the full score shows every line of music of every instrument of the orchestra.

When you are looking at a Beethoven symphony, such as the Storm movement of the *Pastoral* Symphony in F major, you can see the trumpets are written in E-flat and the horns in F, and they are playing the Cs as written at one point, but there are no Cs in those chords – and surprisingly, you don’t hear any wrong notes. You say, “How was that possible?!” I then realized there was a transposition in the orchestra score. In order to learn more about orchestration transposition, I went to the local public library to borrow a book by Walter Piston (American composer of classical music), entitled *Orchestration*, that explained transposing music instruments. So, that was basically how I taught myself.

In terms of how I discovered my passion toward the work of an orchestra librarian, when I was still in high school I was already handling the band and the orchestral music materials as a librarian. During that time, I realized that the band director had to spend a lot of time putting folders on music stands at the beginning of each rehearsal – something I found to be most inefficient. So, I proposed myself to the band director and said, “I don’t have a class before the band rehearsal. How about I come to the band rehearsal earlier and put all the folders out and pick them up afterwards,” and his reply was, “Okay, that would be nice.” Basically, I streamlined the whole system for handing out music at all the rehearsals. During my time at Curtis, I also served as their student orchestra librarian. It was basically how my training in orchestral librarianship began. At Tanglewood, I started to learn how to work as a proper orchestra librarian.

Even at this stage of my career, I am still learning. I think the job nature of orchestral librarianship fits my personality very well – and I absolutely love the process, esoterica, trivia, etc.

*Could you describe your career path to becoming an orchestra librarian at the NYP?*

LT: Before joining the NYP in 1985, I served as librarian of the Berkshire (now Tanglewood) Music Center Orchestra during the summers of 1973–1978, worked for the music publishers C. F. Peters Corporation and G. Schirmer, Inc., and became the Oklahoma Symphony’s first full-time librarian in 1977. During my 1979–1985 tenure as librarian of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra,<sup>3</sup> I also played the occasional second tuba part, including a recording of the Berlioz Requiem under then Music Director Robert Shaw. I am an active member and former three-term president of MOLA: An Association of Music Performance Librarians.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Available at: <https://www.atlantasympphony.org/>

<sup>4</sup>MOLA: An Association of Music Performance Librarians. Available at: <https://mola-inc.org/>

The two seasons spent in music publishing gave me an understanding of administrative procedure and great insight into the other end of the pipeline, so to speak. Users of printed music are at one end and publishers at the other. At C. F. Peters, I was processing both sales and rental orders, picking the music to be shipped, and making packing slips and invoices for the rental orders. At G. Schirmer, I processed rental orders and public inquiries, working with church organists, high school and university conductors, and librarians for all sizes of orchestras and bands.

The insight into the other end of the pipeline relates to what it takes for a publisher to get music out the door when a librarian or other user of the printed product places an order. Some people overstate the urgency of orders they place, perhaps because they're afraid the publisher will delay processing the order in the same way the customer delayed placing the order. Sometimes, quoting the shipping cost for rush delivery (remember, this is the early 1970s) would make the order much less urgent than it had been at the outset of the conversation. Publishers have to do certain things before music can go out the door. Those things are required, not optional, so that the composer is properly credited for the performance in question and so the contents of the shipment are listed in order to be checked against the return shipment. What is an emergency for a librarian is not necessarily an emergency for a publisher, and publishers learn very quickly who exaggerates urgency. Those who exaggerate urgency are not necessarily taken seriously when an actual emergency exists. The main thing learned was that a librarian must always be honest with a publisher – the relationship is not adversarial – in order to receive the best service.

My final audition for Principal Librarian of the NYP took place in April 1985, and Zubin Mehta asked me in his most intimidating music director's voice, "Why do you want to work for the New York Philharmonic?" I replied, "Because I'm from New York and I want my children to know their grandparents."

And I won the job.

*As the Principal Librarian of the NYP, could you outline your job description and areas of responsibilities?*

LT: As the Principal Librarian, I am responsible for overseeing the overall operations of the NYP Library, from renting music or acquiring new editions, through music preparation for performance, to post-performance record keeping. There are three librarians in the section: the Principal Librarian and two Assistant Principal Librarians. Sara Griffin is one Assistant Principal Librarian and there is a vacant position caused by a recent retirement. We are all responsible for the accuracy, clarity, organization, and distribution of the music the orchestra performs. Indeed, we are all musical sleuths who must figure out which publisher to contact for any given piece of music; possess a knowledge of instrumental ranges, transpositions, and arcane notational conventions for the entire orchestra; be highly organized multitaskers with an encyclopedic knowledge of the repertoire and an eye for detail; and have very neat handwriting!

In my opinion, the most important thing we orchestra librarians do is to keep track of the entire collection, and to put the right piece of paper in front of

the right person at the right time. Every piece of paper onstage passes through the NYP Library. We acquire and rent music, prepare bow markings as indicated by string section leaders, correct printing errors, and fix unworkable page turns. We also put out and pick up the players' parts and the conductors' scores, and occasionally the conductor's baton. We keep performance records, and administer the database of artists, repertoire, and performances. We also disseminate instrumentation details for each work to the operations, artistic, and orchestra personnel departments; fix damaged music; provide the conductor and assistant conductor with scores; offer estimated timings and durations of the pieces; provide practice parts for string players; and are fluent in score reading. I am proud to say that we are the second-best score readers in the building after the conductor.

When the orchestra goes on an overseas tour, the most difficult aspect of the job for us is preparing music while we are on tour. We must have all the music for the tour, in addition to as much music as we can carry for programs coming after tour, because the players need to prepare for that as well. There are four library trunks that travel together with the orchestra: the heaviest trunks the stagehands handle contain all the parts, some of the music director's scores, music for the weeks following tour, manuscript paper, and office supplies. Usually, two librarians go on tour and one remains in NYC to help in an emergency via fax or email, in addition to keeping up with the workload.

As orchestra librarians, all three of us are official members of the NYP, and our names appear on the 106-member roster. Each librarian was hired by the music director. I was hired by Zubin Mehta, and Sara Griffin was hired by Alan Gilbert following an audition before an orchestra committee. That involved extensive oral and written examinations covering repertoire and industry knowledge, publisher information, music copying, written bowings and cuts, all orchestral instruments and their transpositions, and copyright law.

*When you were still working as an orchestra librarian trainee, did you have a mentor, and what kind of guidance would you be seeking from your mentor?*

LT: My mentor was Victor Alpert, the Principal Librarian of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.<sup>5</sup> He was the one who trained me in many different ways, and was always there to answer my questions. The telephone wires between Boston and Oklahoma City had a lot of use when I started my career!

*The working relationships between the orchestra librarians and the orchestra players (including the conductors), how have they evolved over the past four decades?*

LT: For the NYP players, they all come to the library for their music, so we certainly get to know all of them, including their personal idiosyncrasies. For the musicians who have poor eyesight, they want to have their music enlarged. Certain musicians only want to see the same parts they have been using in the past – no new editions. There are also musicians who want only music without

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<sup>5</sup>Boston Symphony Orchestra. Available at: <https://www.bso.org/>

other people's markings. There are NYP players who look at the music and then ask for a copy of just one or two pages of music. There are also certain individuals who only want their music 30 minutes before actual rehearsals. Some would come on Saturday nights to get the music for the Tuesday morning rehearsals. On the other hand, there are early acquirers who always want their music six or eight weeks before the actual performance. In other words, different musicians learn in different styles and at different paces. Different musicians prefer different things and have different needs. Nowadays, we sometimes provide music in PDF for players who use devices when practicing. For stage use, though, all music is printed, not electronic.

This also applied to conductors, as some conductors prefer to get their hands on the scores well ahead of time, while other conductors don't. Some conductors prefer to bring their own scores that don't necessarily match the editions we have in the orchestra library. Other conductors are very needy, and everything has to match, and they would want us (as orchestra librarians) to make big and small changes here and there.

*Some orchestras have full-time librarians on staff, while some do not. Half a century ago, many professional orchestras also did not have full-time librarians. In your opinion, how does the work of an orchestra librarian help improve the overall quality of a concert performance?*

LT: I wouldn't say that half a century ago many professional orchestras did not have full-time librarians. At least in the United States, the larger orchestras have had full-time, non-playing librarians for at least the past 100 years. I don't know about non-US orchestras, but orchestras in general have known for a long time that someone with specialist skills and knowledge is important to the concert performance.

The work of an orchestra librarian directly contributes to the quality of performance by removing doubt in a performer's mind. That is, the level of concentration required to perform at the highest level is upset when the performer wonders about the printed part: is this the correct bowing, is there an error in the music that caused me to enter a measure early, am I going to make this quick page turn in the middle of an important passage, or any of the other things that can go through a performer's mind and disrupt their concentration. A librarian ensures that the bowings are correct, fixes errors, and can adjust page turns in a way that a performer without specialist skills cannot. When a player says he or she has made a correction in an idiosyncratic way that the player in question can read, the question a librarian asks is, "That's fine for you, but if you're sick the day after tomorrow, will your substitute be able to read what you've done?"

There are also emergencies – a player might leave a part at home and a non-playing librarian is able to track down a replacement part, whether from another orchestra, the Internet, or the rental library of a music publisher. A playing librarian is between imperatives: preparing to play in the rehearsal or concert and acquiring an emergency replacement part.

*Could you give our readers a brief introduction to the NYP, including its orchestra library that you are currently in charge of?*

LT: There can be no brief history of this orchestra, since the NYP performed its very first concert in December 1842; that is, almost 178 years ago. The NYP is one of the leading American orchestras, popularly referred to as the “Big Five.” The Big Five orchestras of the United States, in order of formation, are as follows:

- (1) New York Philharmonic (1842).
- (2) Boston Symphony Orchestra (1881).
- (3) Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1891).
- (4) Philadelphia Orchestra (1900).
- (5) The Cleveland Orchestra (1918).

The NYP was founded in 1842 by the American conductor Ureli Corelli Hill, with the support of the Irish composer William Vincent Wallace. The orchestra was then called the Philharmonic Society of New York, and performed its first concert on December 7, 1842, before an audience of 600. This “first” concert was opened with Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, led by Maestro Hill himself. Since 2018, Jaap van Zweden has been serving as the Music Director of the NYP.

The NYP is indeed a very large orchestra. However, I think the biggest department of the NYP is the fundraising department. They are usually called the development department because all American orchestras depend on private philanthropy and civic support to fuel concert programs that serve community needs. In the United States, there is very little governmental support for arts and culture. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for orchestras, art museums, ballet companies, and theater companies to raise enough money to survive. Hence, almost every single large orchestra and opera company in the United States has a very, very large development (fundraising) department, and there is no exception for the NYP.

In terms of staffing, the NYP has about 106 musicians in total, that is, including three librarians and 103 instrumentalists. On the administration side, before COVID-19, the NYP had about 75 people on staff, but that’s been reduced.

With reference to the staffing structure of the NYP Library, we have altogether three orchestra librarians – although there’s currently a vacant position – working full-time. As the Principal Librarian, I was trained as a tuba player. My NYP colleague holds a doctorate degree in oboe performance. All of us work at every rehearsal and most of the concerts.

*Could you describe the signature repertoire of the NYP and its contribution to New York City’s overall arts and cultural scene?*

LT: The NYP is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States, and also one of the oldest in the world. Since 1917, the orchestra has made more than 2,000 recordings. The roster of composers and conductors who have led the NYP includes such historic figures as Theodore Thomas, Antonín Dvořák, Pyotr Illyich

Tchaikovsky, Gustav Mahler (Music Director, 1909–1911), Otto Klemperer, Richard Strauss, Willem Mengelberg (Music Director, 1922–1930), Wilhelm Furtwängler, Arturo Toscanini (Music Director, 1928–1936), Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, Bruno Walter (Music Advisor, 1947–1949), Dimitri Mitropoulos (Music Director, 1949–1958), Klaus Tennstedt, George Szell (Music Advisor, 1969–1970), Erich Leinsdorf, Leonard Bernstein (Music Director, 1958–1969), Pierre Boulez (Music Director, 1971–1977), Zubin Mehta (Music Director, 1978–1991), Kurt Masur (Music Director, 1991–2002), and Alan Gilbert (Music Director, 2009–2017).

In terms of our signature repertoire, the NYP has commissioned and/or premiered works by leading composers from every era since its founding. Such highlights include the world premieres of Dvořák’s *Symphony No. 9, “From the New World”* (1893), Rachmaninoff’s *Piano Concerto No. 3* (1909), Gershwin’s *Concerto in F* (1925), and Berio’s *Sinfonia* (1968), as well as the US premieres of Beethoven’s *Symphonies No. 3* (1843), *No. 4* (1849), *No. 7* (1843), *No. 8* (1844), and *No. 9* (1846), and Brahms’s *Symphony No. 4* (1886).

Other recent premieres/commissions include *On the Transmigration of Souls* (a composition for orchestra, chorus, and children’s choir) by John Adams, dedicated to the victims of the 9/11 attacks. The work was premiered by the NYP on September 19, 2002, at Avery Fisher Hall.<sup>6</sup> *On the Transmigration of Souls* was awarded the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Music, and also received the 2005 Grammy Award for Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, and Best Classical Contemporary Composition.

In terms of our education and community outreach activities, each season the NYP connects with up to 50 million music lovers through live concerts in New York and around the world; international broadcasts on television, radio, and online; recordings; and education programs. As a resource for its community and the world, the NYP complements annual free concerts across the city – including the *Concerts in the Parks, Presented by Didi and Oscar Schafer* – with *Philharmonic Free Fridays*, which offers free tickets to young people ages 13–26.

The orchestra has continued its famed *Young People’s Concerts* (ages 6–12), which began in 1924, and subsequently developed *Very Young People’s Concerts* (ages 3–6) and *Young People’s Concerts for Schools* (grades 3–12). The Philharmonic reaches thousands of students annually through *Philharmonic Schools* – an in-school program in which *Philharmonic Teaching Artists* guide students in how to listen, perform, and compose music, and the *NYP Very Young Composers Program* – an after-school program in which students in New York and cities around the world learn to create their own music. Committed to developing tomorrow’s leading orchestral musicians, the *Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra* also offers training for pre-college students by NYP musicians in partnership with institutions in New York committed to strong orchestra programs.

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<sup>6</sup>In 2015, this venue was renamed David Geffen Hall.

*What have been the most challenging projects at the NYP?*

LT: It would have to be our staged versions of Broadway shows. They are not written for a full symphony orchestra and we have to make them work for the NYP.

*The majority of the NYP musicians, where do they come from?*

LT: The NYP players come from all over the world and have since 1842.

*From 2009 to 2017, Maestro Alan Gilbert served as the Music Director of the NYP. Could you describe his working style?*

LT: Maestro Alan Gilbert treated everyone with tremendous respect, and also a great deal of humor. The NYP Library is next door to the music director's suite. I would often go in there and ask the music director's assistant, "Does Maestro Gilbert have a moment? I only have a simple question for him." The answer would often be, "Yes, he does." For a librarian, this sort of easy communication with the music director is a wonderful thing.

I will tell you a funny story. When I am sitting at my desk inside the orchestra library, my back is to the entrance door. For a 10:00 a.m. rehearsal, I would often come in at 7:45 a.m. – for the reason that I could get more work done when the office telephone doesn't ring. Normally, the phone in the NYP Library does not start ringing until 9:00 a.m.

As I was sitting at my desk one morning, I heard a voice from behind me, and that was Alan Gilbert. I hadn't heard him come in. I looked down and realized that Maestro Gilbert was wearing sneakers or rubber-soled shoes. So, I jokingly said to him, "We librarians prefer that music directors wear hard-soled shoes." The next morning, he came in with no shoes at all, just wearing socks! It was indicative of the relationship that he felt he could make a joke. However, that was something that you would not expect from the older generation of orchestra conductors.

Maestro Kurt Masur was the Music Director of the NYP from 1991 to 2002. Before a concert performance, Maestro Masur simply wanted to concentrate on the music, and preferred not to talk to anyone. Maestro Lorin Maazel would want to be away from people – doing some simple physical warm up exercises; for example, stretching his arms and his back like an athlete – as you know conducting can be intensely physical. Whereas for Alan Gilbert, he would often want to talk about the repertoire, or even make jokes about something that had no relevance to music. The performances were always on this mind, though. He would sometimes say, "Did you hear that place [in the music] last night? Listen to it again tonight. It's going to be different." As you can see, different conductors have different personalities – that is why the same piece of music could sound differently when conducted by different conductors, even with the same orchestra.

*What would be the worst nightmare that could ever happen to an orchestra librarian?*

LT: Everything stops in the middle of an orchestra rehearsal and you hear the dreaded announcement, "We need a librarian on the stage." We have all

experienced that once or twice in our career as orchestra librarians and it is a terrible feeling. If it is a live concert and you see the conductor walking toward the stage door after turning the first few pages, because you have put the wrong score out – these could be our worst nightmares.

*Were there any emergency situations in the past when you had to make use of your professional skills and experiences to resolve them in order to keep the show running?*

LT: Back in 1977, when the Oklahoma Symphony was performing a concerto by Vaughan Williams on an out-of-town concert, the second clarinetist came up to me and said, “I left my music for the concerto at home!” This is before the Internet era and the music had to be hired, and we could not find another copy. The assistant conductor had left the extra score at home as well, so the player couldn’t read from the score. So, I had to start writing out the music on paper by hand – the second clarinet part – which took a great deal of time. Finally, I ran out of time and gave what I had done to the clarinetist and said, “This is all I have. I hope you can remember the rest.”

Many years later, back in New York, the NYP was doing a complete performance of the opera *Beatrice et Bénédicte* by Hector Berlioz. The first oboist came to me and said, “I left my music for the entire opera at home!” I said, “Oh, that is very bad indeed,” because it would take him 40 minutes to drive home, and it was just 20 minutes before the call to the stage. I asked, “Is there someone at home who can bring the music, so you will at least have it for Act II?” Unfortunately, he said, there was nobody home. The librarian I called at the Metropolitan Opera couldn’t locate their music for this opera, so, I sat on the stage between the first flute and first oboe turning pages in a full score from which the oboist had to read. I also was pointing to the oboe line in the score so the player could play without having to first find his line. Another reason score reading is a necessary skill for us librarians!

*The NYP is one of the most recorded orchestras in the world. Studio recordings versus recordings of live performances, which is more challenging and would create more work for the orchestra librarians?*

LT: I think studio recordings are rarely made nowadays, and we have not been in a recording studio in quite a few years. In my opinion, studio recordings are more difficult for us orchestra librarians because the conductor has more time to think of things and to work out any small details. Maybe after hearing a take and a playback, the conductor would say, “Oh, let’s get the librarian, and I want to adjust this and that ...” – and this is something you can’t get to in a live concert recording.

Such adjustments or changes could be a simple bowing change, or it could involve giving the second clarinet the same passage as the first clarinet – and all these would have to be done during the break in the recording session. If the break is 25 minutes long, and the conductor listened to the playback for 10 minutes, there would be only 15 minutes to get the job done. Time is very expensive during a recording session. Every single minute counts.

*Could you describe your typical day at work? Is there ever a typical day at work?*

LT: There is never a typical day. A typical *week* is having all the librarians at the following orchestra rehearsals; that is, Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m., and then another rehearsal session from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.; while on Thursdays, the general rehearsals start at 10:00 a.m. Our job is to put the music onstage for the orchestra players one hour before each rehearsal session.

After the orchestra members have finished rehearsing the first piece, very often there is music to move around. The stage crew will then move the music stands to the most convenient place without concern for what music is on the music stand. If there is a piano coming in, this would usually involve moving all of the first violins and all of the second violins in order to bring the piano from the backstage, because of the physical nature of the concert hall. So, we orchestra librarians go to the stage and take the music off the music stands, and then wait for the crew to put the music stands in the new place. And then we put the music back on the music stands.

I am the one who prepares the work schedules for all the NYP librarians. Sometimes there can be an extra rehearsal for next week on Friday or on Saturday. For the actual performances, two librarians would come to every evening concert, one librarian would get that concert off. Our work schedules rotate accordingly. For the Friday matinees, all three of us work, and then on Saturdays, two of us again.

*As the Principal Librarian of the NYP, could you describe your management and leadership style?*

LT: I treat my colleagues with respect – respect for their abilities as librarians, and respect for ideas they propose. My way to address a project is not always the best way, and if a colleague proposes what is clearly a better way, that’s the way we do it. If a colleague wants to handle a project from start to finish, once we’ve discussed the methods, I stay out of the way unless asked to weigh in. The NYP Library works at the highest professional level and I try to set an example by making certain my work is at that level. A friend said to me, “When you say something is ‘good enough,’ you know it isn’t.”

I make every effort to provide the library with the tools – software and analog – and the information we need to do our job. If an administrative department needs to be pressed for information, I keep asking – politely – until we have the information we need. Sometimes the information is not forthcoming from the administrative side, and when possible, I try to get that information directly from the music director.

I also make certain there are not unrealistic expectations for what the library can do. When necessary, I explain the scope of a project to the relevant people in order that they understand what can and cannot be done, and how long said project will take. The library does not over-promise and by being honest and realistic, our scope of work and expected completion dates are accepted.

The library is respected because of this realistic approach, and because of the professional quality of the work we do for conductors, soloists, orchestra musicians, and administrative staff. Without this respect, we can't be as useful to the orchestra and administration as we would like to be.

*I understand you are an active member and three-term past president of MOLA: An Association of Music Performance Librarians. Is there any reason why a majority of the MOLA members come from North America and Western Europe, while only very few come from Asia, Russia, or Eastern Europe? For example, librarians of the world-famous Berlin Philharmonic have never been members of MOLA. Do you know the reasons behind it?*

LT: First of all, librarians are not members of MOLA. Rather, musical organizations are members and their librarians benefit from the institutional membership. Some non-North American organizations are not typically joiners of groups such as MOLA. I don't know the reason for that. However, as librarians move from a MOLA organization to a non-MOLA, sometimes they convince their new orchestra to join. The Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna State Opera are examples of this. We have tremendous participation from Nordic organizations and UK-based organizations. We have member organizations in Asia, as well. Organizations from two Baltic countries are represented in our membership. Why are some regions not represented? I don't know. You'll have to ask them.

*Throughout your career as an orchestra librarian, did you ever have any second thoughts or regrets? Or is there something that you wish to have done differently if you were given a second chance in your career?*

LT: Well, every one of us in our own lives has things we wish we had done differently. But in terms of my choice of career, I would say, "No!" I love being an orchestra librarian. Orchestral librarianship is about the process of music preparation, and this is something that I am most interested in. I like to find out how everything works behind the scene, and the orchestra library is the place where all of the details of music preparation come together. So, I have no regrets at all. I get to hear great music performed by great artists and I get to work closely with them also.

*Can you describe what it is like to be working and collaborating in such close proximity with some of the greatest talents in the world of western classical music – maestros from Leonard Bernstein to Lorin Maazel, and also with hundreds of other singers and musicians of star caliber from across the globe?*

LT: Knowing how to handle the different personalities of the orchestra players and the conductors is absolutely important. In fact, every conductor is charismatic, and many of them are definitely dynamic figures on the podium. They simply cannot be conductors without being charismatic. An important part of my job as an orchestra librarian is to deal with those personalities – and they are all different. You have to learn what to say when dealing with certain personalities,

and also to avoid talking and to stay out of their way because they might think you are menial and therefore don't want to give you any time. Without being a psychologist, understanding the different personalities is very vital to be successful as an orchestra librarian.

*COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. How have the NYP and you (as the Principal Librarian) been coping with COVID-19?*

LT: Following the general rehearsal on Thursday, March 12, 2020, word was received that the concert that evening and the following performances of that program – Friday, Saturday, and Tuesday – were canceled. We were told there would be no rehearsals or concerts through the end of March.

Immediately, I gathered the music that was on the stage level, picked up the music that had been left at the stage door for extra and substitute musicians to collect, and returned everything to the library. Emails were sent to publishers notifying them of the canceled performances and most publishers waived their usual cancellation fees. An email auto-signature about the cancellation was made active. After that, I went home to await further developments.

It was announced on March 23 that there would be no concerts in what remained of the 2019–2020 season.

Needless to say, the further developments were terrible. Eventually, New York City became a locus of the pandemic. By May 1, there were more than 10,000 deaths in New York City alone attributed to COVID-19. Certainly, this city, and the world, had been turned upside down. David Geffen Hall was closed, all of Lincoln Center's buildings were closed, and no one was to come to any of the buildings without permission.

Finally, permission was received to come to David Geffen Hall on May 11. While there was not music to prepare for concerts, there was music to be processed: the music from the canceled concerts needed to be removed from the stage folders and sorted again by composer and title, as did music that had been prepared and put into folders for following concerts. A list of all of the music out with players had to be made, and the players contacted to ask that the music be returned. Rented music had to be returned, once the sets were complete, and there were invoices for shipping charges to be processed.

With no concerts, there was no music to prepare. On June 10, an announcement was made that concerts through January 5, 2021, were canceled. Given this cancellation, it was decided that long-deferred maintenance of David Geffen Hall could be undertaken and it was necessary to empty the entire building: for the Philharmonic, this meant instruments, offices, dressing rooms, and the library. The librarians packed more than 150 boxes of music shelved in our in-building storage area plus the entire working library, including music, scores, reference materials, and accoutrements. Everything was moved to a temporary library space.

It was interesting for us librarians to have our hands on nearly every piece of music the Philharmonic had in its collection, going back to our founding in 1842. The most interesting find is a score and set of parts of an orchestration by Franz

Liszt of the Andante cantabile movement of Beethoven's Archduke Trio, which was performed in the 1870s.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the members of orchestra began to make videos of chamber music performances to be streamed on the Philharmonic's website, and the library has had some involvement with this. We scanned parts to be sent digitally to the players for practice and provided physical parts for the recording sessions. Librarians are not present at the recording sessions on account of maximum occupancy limits. The librarians had very little involvement with the Bandwagon concerts, which were performed outdoors by small groups at various places in the city.

New York City does not at this time permit performing arts venues to admit an audience in sufficient numbers to make a performance financially possible, however socially distanced and tested they might be. The Metropolitan Opera has canceled their entire 2020–2021 season and Broadway theaters do not expect to resume performances until May 2021.

It is hoped that in January 2021, the NYP will come together in part and begin recording, without an audience, smaller-scaled orchestral works for streaming, and the library will certainly be involved in the preparation of this music. Between this writing and January, however, many things can happen, and this is only a plan, not a commitment. Time will tell.

*Why do we turn to music in times of crisis?*

LT: Some of us turn to music in times of crisis, I think, on account of the comfort gained from art of all types. For some reason, the experiencing of art of any sort can be soothing. The use of music to comfort in times of crisis is a long-established practice, and is perhaps as old as humanity itself. It's the documentation of such use that is comparatively recent, not the actual use. This is a question for sociologists and philosophers, not an orchestra librarian!

*How would you summarize your decades of experience and contributions to the profession of music performance librarianship?*

LT: Well, nothing deeply philosophical comes to mind at this point, but I must highlight that it is not an easy job being an orchestra librarian. In order to become a successful orchestra librarian, one must get used to dealing with constant pressures, as well as with different personalities.

As an orchestra player, you don't want to miss a single note in a big oboe solo, otherwise people would start to take notice right away. It is to embarrassing play a wrong note in a big solo piece during a live performance. It is equally embarrassing for us orchestra librarians to make any mistakes even though we are not the ones actually performing onstage. I tell people that it is not a mistake until it leaves the room – meaning that we have to look at the music that we are preparing very carefully before we put it on the stage. But if you are not able to deal with

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<sup>7</sup>The score of this orchestration is available at: <https://archives.nyphil.org/index.php/artifact/0b0d1bca-5bb8-4ab0-92f7-acbb46f373df-0.1?search-type=singleFilter&search-text=%22Liszt%22+%22Beethoven%22&doctype=printedMusic>

that sort of pressure and anxiety, you will probably be very unhappy. Luckily, I can deal with the pressure and anxiety in a way acceptable to myself. If the job nature of an orchestra librarian happens to fit your personality, it could be great fun, and you could derive a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from it.

*What would you be if not an orchestra librarian?*

LT: Probably, not the tuba player at the NYP, but that was my dream as a student!

*Could you describe your most memorable moment with the NYP?*

LT: I have had many memorable moments, but hearing European rhythmic applause for the first time, on the 1988 European tour, was spine-tingling.

*Who is your favorite composer?*

LT: Prokofiev – great use of the tuba.



Photo 2. Lawrence Tarlow following the score in the Hanoi Opera House while the New York Philharmonic rehearses *Tiến Quân Ca*, the national anthem of Vietnam



Photo 3. Lawrence Tarlow receiving instructions during the flight to Pyongyang from Music Director Lorin Maazel regarding an arrangement of *Arirang* to be performed as an encore to the Philharmonic's concert in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.



Photo 4. Lawrence Tarlow conferring with composer Peter Eötvös at Kölner Philharmonie during a rehearsal for the world premiere of *Senza sangue*



Photo 5. Lawrence Tarlow moderating a post-concert panel discussion with members of the New York Philharmonic