

# Seattle Rotary Visits the Symphony

Totem Report December 7, 2016

By John Hamer

“Listen Boldly” is the motto of the Seattle Symphony, and the day’s program gave every member and guest a chance to do exactly that. The lobby of Benaroya Hall was decorated for Christmas with garlands on the balcony and bright ornaments around the room. Bright sunlight streamed through the windows through the entire program.

**President Cathy** called the meeting to order and introduced **Bill Center** for an invocation. He played a brief excerpt from “Victory at Sea” to set the tone for his remarks, which recalled the Pearl Harbor attack 75 years ago today. He stressed the need for forgiveness and reconciliation: “Time, wisdom and hard work helped heal the most terrible wounds of war,” Center said.



**Cathy** asked all members who joined in December to stand and be recognized. She gave special recognition of **Assunta Ng**, who has been in Seattle #4 for 25 years but was a member of the International District Rotary before that and is one of the longest-tenured women in Rotary.

**Sue Nixon** announced the newly elected members of the Seattle Rotary Service Foundation, the Rotary Board and next year’s officers. (See list in the Totem)

**Jim Duncan** introduced the day’s program. He is on the Benaroya Hall board, and introduced **Simon Woods**, Symphony CEO, who announced that Musical Director Ludovic Morlot was ill and could not join us today.

Woods said the Symphony has an annual budget of \$30 million and 250 employees, making it the second-largest arts organization in the region, after the Seattle Theater Group. The Symphony ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. out of 600 orchestras. Attendance is about 300,000 annually for Symphony concerts and 200,000 for other events.

He noted that 25 years ago, the Symphony wasn’t recognized at the national level, but Gerard Schwarz and others built its international reputation. The League of American Orchestras notes that over 25 million people attend symphony performances across the country every year – which is more than go to professional football games.

Woods introduced Dave Sabee, a cellist for the Symphony and a Grammy Award winner. He’s been here 29 years and said that from the stage, orchestra members love to watch the audience.



“We take very seriously our leadership and stewardship role,” Sabee said. Locating Benaroya Hall downtown “was a great thing to do” and brought the business community and political leaders together.

He noted that the Symphony plays concerts, makes recordings, and commissions composers. “Upstairs is a state-of-the-art recording studio,” he said, and held up a vinyl record and a Grammy Award.

He introduced four Symphony musicians to play Mozart’s “Flute Quartet in D Major,” featuring two violins, a cello and a flute. They received loud applause.



Woods mentioned several other Symphony projects:

- **Seattle Collaborative Orchestra**, which brings together professional, school and amateur musicians.
- **Community Connections**, which gives away tickets to people in the community who otherwise couldn’t afford them. It now has 60 partner groups and has given away about 7,000 tickets in the past few years.
- **Simple Gifts**, which works with organizations dealing with the homeless: “Our role is to inspire everyone in our community.”

A short video featured some other programs:

- **Trained Teaching Artists**, who make 80 community visits a year.
- **Prison Program**, which takes the Symphony to the state prison at Monroe and the women’s prison at Purdy.
- **Education and Community Engagement Programs**, which reach 65,000 people a year.



In closing, Woods said: “Thank you to all of you for your support. We have to raise \$11 million every year just to keep the doors open.”

In the Q&A session, **Burr Stewart** asked about the state of music education in schools, which helps develop intellect and teamwork. Woods said it was not declining in Seattle, which has a major focus on arts in schools, especially in South Seattle and the Central District. He thanked **David Endicott** for the “Music for Life” program, which provides instruments to schools.

**Steve Crane** asked about the homeless project. Woods said they bring people in to hear the Symphony and musicians visit different nonprofits. He mentioned a “Lullaby Project” where homeless mothers write lullabies for their children.

**Craig Klinkam** asked about the global impact of the Symphony. Woods said they have musicians from Istanbul, Jerusalem, Shanghai, Beijing, Moscow, St. Petersburg and many other places. “You have to be so good to get in,” he said.

Sabee added: “The real lubricant and emphasis on touring” takes the Symphony’s reputation around the world. “If anyone wants to sponsor a European tour, let me know.”

**Bill Center** asked what the Symphony would do with more money. “No matter how much we have, we’d like to do more,” Woods said. “The sky’s the limit.”

In closing, **Cathy** said she grew up in a musical family and took violin lessons as a child. “In this season, find what feeds your soul. Let’s have joy!”

