

Seattle Symphony Volunteers

2019–2020 Annual Report

The Seattle Symphony Volunteers embrace and enhance the mission, values and goals of the Seattle Symphony through Service.

Seattle Symphony Volunteers 2019–2020 Annual Report

This Annual Report highlights the accomplishments of the Seattle Symphony Volunteers (SSV) during the 2019–2020 season. The report is divided into four sections: an *Overview*, a summary of *Public-Facing* volunteer activities, a summary of the *Behind-the-Scenes* activities and *Future Plans*. The accomplishments throughout are a result of the exceptional dedication of the volunteers as well as the support accorded to the volunteers by the entire Symphony family.

OVERVIEW

To accomplish the SSV service mission, 357 dedicated volunteers donated approximately 5,750 hours in various capacities, an equivalent donation of \$189,865 during the dramatically truncated 2019–2020 Seattle Symphony season. Through volunteer dues, SSV was also able to contribute \$7,500 as a matching grant during the GiveBig campaign, thereby enabling the Symphony to raise a vital \$15,000 as part of its overall fundraising effort.

During 2019–2020 and into the early 2020–21 season, the SSV Endowment Fund volunteers (managed by the *Endowment Committee* and represented by Isa Nelson) made its final contribution to the Seattle Symphony Orchestra by donating a second and much needed timpani set. Culminating this long-standing (1981) management, the SSV Endowment Committee is being disbanded and is transferring full management of the Fund and its earned income to the Seattle Symphony Foundation and their Endowment to support our orchestra.

Volunteers are proud to make substantial contributions to the Seattle Symphony. We contribute our time, talents and dedication to the Symphony organization, the Symphony patrons, and the Symphony volunteers in many important ways.

On behalf of the Seattle Symphony Volunteers, thank you to the Seattle Symphony Board, to the Seattle Symphony staff and to all volunteers for giving and creating a welcoming Symphony family.

Carole Rush, SSV President 2019–2020

Seattle Symphony Volunteers 2019–2020 Annual Report

PUBLIC-FACING ACTIVITIES

The *public-facing* service activities of the volunteers are the primary focus of the SSV. During 2019–2020 we have supported the Symphony in the following ways:

Education / Community Engagement (Coordinator Shirley Jenkins):

A highly-motivated and multitalented pool of volunteers support the EDCE department by introducing the joys of music to children of all ages as well as adults. In this shortened season they supported:

- Crafts preparation before 11 preschool and elementary school concerts
- Instrument exploration and art projects prior to two *First Concert Series* events
- Pre-concert musical and art activities before each of the three sets of *Tiny Tots* concerts
- Pre-concert musical and art projects before the three *Family Concerts*
- Notebook preparation and logistical guidance for the high school *Community Youth Chorus*
- Assistance for each session of the *Northwest Center Community Composition Project*
- General assistance for the three *Community Concerts*.

Volunteer Ushers (Coordinator Dick Mori):

The Volunteer Usher program provides volunteers to partner with the Symphony-employed usher staff with the goal of helping ensure an enjoyable concert experience for all Symphony patrons through assistance with programs, seating directions and answering patron questions. In this virus-impacted season a pool of 241 volunteer ushers supported 81 concerts with 814 volunteer usher shifts, equating to approximately 3,250 volunteer hours. Next season will also involve providing additional training review and the development of new training tools.

Artist Aides (Coordinator Carole Rush):

Artist Aides provide both airport and miscellaneous in-city transportation for the artistic guests of the Seattle Symphony, quite often being the initial in-person contacts for the Symphony's visitors. Until the Seattle Symphony season was curtailed, the Artist Aides supported 484 guests performing in 41 concert series, drove ~7,600 miles and donated close to \$500 in parking fees. This 25-year-old program has been suspended indefinitely because of pandemic precautions and will be re-evaluated once a new-normal is achieved.

Docents (Coordinator Gaile Gray):

The docent program provides scheduled, guided tours of Benaroya Hall. Five docents are trained in presentation of the basic Benaroya Hall information and in answering questions. In this season's abbreviated schedule they led five tours, one in a snowstorm, and approximately 100 guests visited—some from as far away as South Korea, Poland, Japan and Russia with others from as near as Burien and Seattle.

Audition Support (Coordinator Bonnie Seelinger):

Volunteers assist with greeting those who are auditioning, responding to requests during the audition process, providing transportation when necessary and assisting the orchestra management with requests to make the process run smoothly. Six volunteers assisted the viola auditions in February.

Friday Matinee Bus Greeters (Coordinator Olga Sakharova):

For each Friday Matinee, 8-9 volunteers assist Group Services by greeting and assisting Seattle

Seattle Symphony Volunteers 2019–2020 Annual Report

Symphony patrons who are transported to the concert on buses arranged by the Symphony. Plans evolved this season to accommodate Seattle's Third Avenue traffic revisions. Patrons and volunteers all adjusted well and were able to enjoy the four concerts that occurred prior to March.

Symphonica (Coordinator Joe Brock):

At each concert volunteers work with Seattle Symphony staff member Joe Brock to support Symphonica sales.

Gratitude Project: (Coordinator Lynn Morgan)

This special 2019–2020 project was undertaken as an extra effort to assist the Development department contact many of the donors who contributed to GiveBig. After nine SSV Board members contributed 11 hours for 85 contacts to test the process, 36 volunteers donated 173 hours over 21 days to make 1,146 contacts through phone calls or by writing Thank You notes. These volunteers also donated approximately \$460 in postage and supplies to make this project a success.

BEHIND the SCENES ACTIVITIES

In addition to the primary focus on public-facing activities, numerous volunteer and Seattle Symphony staff-supporting activities occur *Behind the Scenes*.

Membership: (Coordinator Sue Schindele, then Lynn Morgan, then Susan Amante)

Membership team members contact each applicant who uses the SSV online application process and then interview each individual who remains interested in volunteering. All volunteers pay dues to support SSV donations to the Symphony and internal SSV events. During the season:

- Membership dropped from 427 to 357 due to pandemic closures. 22 applicants remain on hold.
- The pandemic impact and inability to process membership renewal resulted in a less than average SSV cash reserve at the end of the fiscal year.
- The Volunteer Manual was updated twice for Board Membership and process changes.
- Demographic data (by age and sex and service) were added to detailed reports.
- Additional contact processes were developed to better retain and attract volunteers.

Member Events: (Coordinators Sarah Light and Bonnie Seelinger)

“Wine & Wisdom” events are held several times each year to enable volunteers to meet each other and to enjoy an educational program related to the Symphony. A portion of member dues pay for these events which include food and beverages.

- In November Lee Mills (Associate Conductor), Sydney Adedamola (Second Violin), and Will Langlie-Miletich (Section Bass) joined W&W to discuss their past experience plus their current experiences in joining the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.
- Originally other plans for the year were for volunteers to host one potluck for the Symphony staff and another for the musicians in addition to providing active support for the return of Your Ma Would Be Proud. These plans will resurface when group-gathering conditions change.

Volunteer Office: (Coordinator Diane Gray)

The Volunteer Office responds to inbound communications, maintains the volunteer database and volunteer hours, updates comp ticket availability and ticket balances, processes new membership and renewals, assists with Wine & Wisdom events, tracks hall tour requests and completes other tasks from

Seattle Symphony Volunteers 2019–2020 Annual Report

the SSV Board and committees as needed. Seven volunteers worked in the Volunteer Office until March and two currently work remotely answering emails and keeping databases updated. Working jointly with the SSO liaisons, the office also handles additional short-notice requests for volunteer support on special projects, such as mailings for the Development department.

Sound Bites: (Edited by Carmen Spofford)

A volunteer newsletter is published every other month containing articles of interest to volunteers, introductions of various people who have active volunteer contact and updates about happenings within the volunteer organization as well as links to music information of interest. During the season a process was developed to allow access to past issues online. A link to a recent edition of Sound Bites from June is <http://archive.skem1.com/csb/Public/show/aqxq-23r1kx--qa2c0-1o15k3j8>.

SSV Board: (Led by Carole Rush 2019-20 Season)

During 2019–2020 major SSV Board goals were to focus on the well-being of the volunteers and to evaluate and improve the internal processes of the SSV.

Results:

- Developed a Mission Statement for the SSV Board itself to ensure that the board was focusing on *all* of its stakeholders—the Seattle Symphony—orchestra and staff, the Seattle Symphony patrons and the Seattle Symphony Volunteers.

“The Seattle Symphony Volunteer Board unleashes the diverse talents and ideas of the volunteers, coordinates volunteer programs, and seeks to enrich the community experience.”

- Implemented an improved SSV Board nomination and election process and initiated an on-line voting system that will continue to be used in future years.
- Notified all volunteers that their memberships have been extended until 8/31/2021 due to disruptions of normal volunteering functions during the 2019–2020 season.
- Developed a budget with several variable categories that will enable SSV to function through next season with reduced dues income, if necessary.
- Developed a dues-renewal process that can be used while access to Benaroya Hall is unavailable and during the implementation of new computer systems at the Symphony.
- Communicated plans and status more frequently to all volunteers through Sound Bites articles and all-volunteer emails, providing more transparency about SSV Board status and SSV finances.
- Completed a technology-skills survey to identify more ways volunteers might be able to serve different Symphony needs.
- Implemented an on-going board-meeting improvement process including stated operating principles and improved monitoring of action items.
- Smoothly made leadership transitions for Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Chair that resulted from the loss of two of the initial board members.

Seattle Symphony Volunteers 2019–2020 Annual Report

FUTURE PLANS

Retaining a vibrant and enthusiastic volunteer cadre is essential for a healthy volunteer organization. Fortunately our attrition rate seems somewhat lower than for comparable volunteer organizations. Until it is possible to resume some of the normal volunteer activities, the SSV Board is planning to

- Conduct a survey to determine what type of internet-accessible programs are of most interest and then plan how to implement these activities to keep volunteers engaged and feeling valued.
- Work with our SSO liaisons to find additional opportunities for volunteer assistance from home.
- Update the Volunteer Policies and Processes Manual which has not been reviewed and updated since 2014–15.
- Complete action items from the Fall 2019 retreat which had to be put on hold.

Note: Each year most board members prepare detailed annual reports. The composite detailed report will also be made available to all volunteers and will be posted online in the SSV documents.