



LAFF

THE LAFF SOCIETY Promoting Social and Professional Contacts Among Former Staff Members of the Ford Foundation

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Betsy Campbell and Suzanne Siskel

Betsy Campbell and Suzanne Siskel will assume the office of president of The LAFF Society effective January 1, the seventh and eighth members to lead LAFF in its 27-year history and the first as co-presidents.

They succeed **Shepard Forman**, who has been president since 2009.

“Coming on ten years as president of LAFF,” Shep writes in his last message to the members, which appears on page 3 of this issue, “it is time to recognize the extreme privilege and honor it has been to serve, to welcome Betsy and Suzanne and wish them well, and to return to active membership.”

“The question that leads me now to turn the LAFF presidency over,” he writes, “...stems precisely from the social equation that has bound me to the Foundation and held LAFFers together for more than a quarter century: How can current members’ interests be met and new members recruited in the face of the changed philanthropic and social landscape and so many alternative allegiances?”

LAFF’s first president, at its inception in 1991, was **Edward J. Meade, Jr.**, one of the Society’s founding members. Others have been **Oscar Harkavy**, in 1994; **Siobhan Oppenheimer Nicolau**, in 1997; **Emmett Carson**, in 2002; and **Peter Geithner**, in 2005.

NEW LAFF PRESIDENTS: MEET THEM MARCH 21

Betsy and Suzanne have been vice presidents since 2014, working, as the executive committee defined their positions at the time, to “build a more secure institutional platform to better serve our... members, to reach out to new members, regionally and demographically, and to recruit a younger cadre of former Foundation staff members”.

Campbell was tasked with working on institutional development and membership issues, and Siskel with working with the Society’s eight chapters to help strengthen programs and outreach, particularly among members on the west coast and in Asia.

Campbell, who is the vice president for programs at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in New York City, worked at Ford from 1991

through 2003 in Asset Building and Community Development and in the Rural Poverty and Resources program.

Siskel, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Asia Foundation, worked at Ford from 1990 to 2011 in the Jakarta and Manila offices and in the Community Resource and Development, Social Justice Philanthropy and Gender, Rights and Equality programs.

The new officers will meet members at a LAFF gathering scheduled for March 21 at the Foundation’s renovated headquarters in New York City, which re-opened in November as the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice.

“As the new name suggests,” said Ford’s president, **Darren Walker**, “the building will be a unique asset for champions of social justice across sectors and geographies—a vibrant, fully accessible hub with 54,000 square feet of meeting space for grantees and nonprofits advancing change in the United States and globally.”

In an “open-plan design,” the Ford Foundation will occupy half the total floor space, “allowing us,” said Walker, “to double the previous amount of convening space and welcome our three tenants and their visitors”.

Those “tenants,” who share space in the building, are the United Nations Foundation, Philanthropy New York and the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, “three organizations that contribute to strengthening the social sector locally and globally,” Walker said.

Describing it as a “mission-driven building,” Walker said the headquarters will be “more open to the public, including our landmarked atrium garden, an art gallery where visitors can discover artists whose work engages issues of justice, and a state-of-the-art auditorium with an enlarged stage to host a range of cultural programming, including documentary films”.

Members will be able to tour the building at the March 21 gathering and attend a reception, at which Walker will speak. ■

A TRIBUTE TO MARVIN FELDMAN

In the Summer 1994 issue, the late **Edward Meade**, co-founder and first president of LAFF, paid tribute to **Marvin Feldman**, who had died in November 1993.

I first heard about Marv Feldman in the early 1960s. The late **Mike Harris** was exploring the possibility of the Foundation expanding its activities in the area of vocational and technical education. Mike had recently been in California where he had run across Marv, then a vice president of the Cogswell Polytechnic Institute.

With a model grant from the Rosenberg Foundation, Marv had created and was directing a program that linked the last two years of high school with technical programs at community colleges. Called the “Richmond Plan”, because the schools were in the Richmond school district, the program included team teaching at the high schools. Teachers of English, science, mathematics and industrial arts collaborated to integrate their courses in ways that related to and reinforced each other.

Subsequently, Mike and I went west and made grants to the institute to enable expansion

of the program to other sites, such as San Francisco. There were “Richmond Plan” projects in pre-engineering and food services. Proportionately more students in these programs went to community colleges than did those who graduated from high school. Moreover, the program kept some students in high school who would otherwise have dropped out.

Today, this kind of program is called “tech-prep” and can be found in many communities across the country. More recently, the Clinton administration has recommended a school-to-work program that is very much in line with Marv’s early design. Sadly, in all of this activity, Marvin Feldman is not recognized despite the fact that some of the architects of “tech-prep” knew him and learned from his work.

In 1964, Marv joined the education program staff of the Foundation. In addition to his work in vocational education, e.g., initiating co-operative work-study programs in schools and colleges, we wanted Marv to work with other staff members on school improvement, perhaps integrating vocational education activities into the mainstream of secondary education. Marv teamed, in particular, with **Mario Fantini**. Together, the “M and M” boys, as they were called, helped to fashion the Foundation’s Comprehensive School Improvement. Later, the two became part of the Foundation-wide effort to deal with issues of poverty in urban areas.

Marv also continued efforts directly in vocational education. Because of him, the Foundation assisted several colleges to install cooperative work-study programs and supported Technology for Children, a program in elementary schools that introduced active learning using practical activities to reinforce academic content.

“Active learning”, “engaged learning”, “participatory learning”—whatever the label—is becoming more the mode in schools than ever before. Marv was a proponent of such learning 30 years ago. He argued that children need to be active if they are to learn. He long advocated that schools need to spend less time in passive teaching and more time having students actively engaged in solving problems using real world examples.

Marv left the Foundation in 1969 for assignments with the Federal government, in education and with the Office of Equal Opportunity. Following that, in 1971 he was elected president of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City. When he arrived, FIT was a good technical school that awarded the associate’s degree. (It had some well-known graduates—Calvin Klein, for one.) But Marv elevated FIT to new heights.

During his 21-year-tenure, FIT expanded



An exhibit inside the Marvin Feldman Center at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Photo by Trupal Pandya.

to offer the bachelor’s and master’s degrees. The number of majors and concentrations also grew as Feldman and his board met the new demands of the fashion industry. Enrollments boomed, new buildings were built and FIT became a major institution of its kind nationally.

FIT also went abroad. Feldman opened programs in Italy, Israel and India, to name only some. These programs enabled FIT to be a force in the fashion industry internationally. Clearly, under Marvin Feldman, FIT was transformed.

But what about Marv Feldman as a person? He was one of my closest friends and I cherished his friendship. Marv was a constant optimist. Despite real problems, Marv always saw the positive side. His optimistic spirit never wavered. I once told him that if someone knocked him down he would bounce back up in an instant.

He was dependable. If he said he would do something, you could consider it done. His loyalty never waned. He was always there when you needed him. I am ever grateful that I had the privilege and pleasure of his collegiality and friendship over 30 years. I miss him very much. ■

The LAFF Society

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once remarked at a LAFF meeting that for me the acronym referred to a “lifetime association with the Ford Foundation”.

I referenced the direct and indirect Ford Fellowships that saw me through graduate school, post-doctoral studies and field research in Brazil, my 18 years employed at the Foundation, subsequent Ford support for the Center on International Cooperation that I founded at New York University, and then the presidency of LAFF.

I even joked to **Darren Walker** that the only thing that remained for me was eventual burial in the atrium.

Truth be told, though, the capstone of this lifetime association with the Ford Foundation has been LAFF. The society has provided me continuity and connection, just as the tagline proclaims. But LAFF for me is more than its tagline. It is an identifier. LAFF has kept me tied to an institution that played an enormous role in my formative and professional life, and to admired colleagues through multiple channels that social media simply do not provide.

The question that leads me now to turn the LAFF presidency over to **Betsy Campbell** and **Suzanne Siskel** stems precisely from the social equation that has bound me to the Foundation and held LAFFers together for more than a quarter century: How can current members’ interests be met and new members recruited in the face of the changed philanthropic and social landscape and so many alternative allegiances? **John LaHoud’s** lead article in this issue describes the transition now under way as Betsy and Suzanne, currently LAFF’s vice-presidents, prepare to assume their co-presidency on January 1.

As I thought about what I might say in this, my last message as LAFF President, I turned to **Nellie Toma’s** invaluable Newsletter index to recall LAFF’s recent history, my participation as a member since my retirement from the Foundation in 1996, my inauguration as President upon **Peter Geithner’s** stepping down in November 2009 and the plans we developed to build on the very healthy society that we inherited from Peter.

LAFF has come a long way over the past 27 years, from a small group of founding members whose strong identification with and service to the Foundation left them somewhat aggrieved at their departure. The institutional rift outlasted the society’s growth and diversification, and only began to be overcome with Peter’s thoughtful husbandry.

My inauguration was celebrated at the Foundation where, as reported in the February 2010 newsletter, many of the 150 LAFF

THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



members present spontaneously spoke of their experiences at the Foundation and what the reunion meant for them. By then, LAFF had nearly 500 members, anchored in New York but with regional chapters in Boston, Washington, D.C., Bangkok, Jakarta, Cairo, New Delhi, Beijing and Manila, and one affinity group on reproductive health.

I was able to build on Peter’s accomplishments only with the help of some extraordinary and dedicated members. **Sheila Gordon** chaired a governance committee that laid the basis for an expanded and active Executive Committee and a plan for future transitions that resulted in Betsy’s and Suzanne’s appointments as Vice Presidents. A communications committee, ably led by **Thea Lurie** redesigned the Newsletter with its new logo and tagline and reimaged the website. **Janice Molnar, Janet Maughan** and **Michael Seltzer** developed an excellent series of New York City-based meetings and programs.

A high-point for me occurred at our twenty-fifth anniversary gathering in 2016 when we brought together, under Darren’s warm and welcoming embrace, LAFF’s founding members, represented by **Dick Magat**, with our membership and the Foundation’s active staff (and future LAFF members). Together, we ushered in a new chapter in the LAFF-Foundation relationship, joining past and present in a celebration, as Darren noted, of the importance for the Foundation’s grantmaking of the history the LAFF membership embodies.

None of this would have happened without the devotion of three people who are the mainstays of LAFF: our Secretary-Treasurer, **Nellie Toma**, who literally keeps the society afloat, managing our membership rolls and dues and our finances (such as they are!), facilitating our meetings and events, and fully embodying the spirit of camaraderie and volunteerism that are the very stuff of LAFF; **Michael Seltzer**, our New York City program

chair, who thoughtfully plans our New York events and liaises with the Foundation to ensure their success; and **John LaHoud**, our editor-in-chief who labors untiringly, and brilliantly, to ensure the timely publication of the newsletter that continues to be LAFF’s beating heart.

I am entirely grateful to each of them, as well as to **Aaron Levine**, who played a large part in developing our website, and to **Dorothy Nixon, Susan Huyser** and **Peter Ford** for their work with the newsletter and website, making my job so pleasurable and providing the membership the best our Society has to offer.

It remains for me to say how privileged I feel to have served as your

president over these past nine years and how very pleased I am that Betsy and Suzanne, with your help, have agreed to lead LAFF into a new era.

I say “with your help”, certain that my first comments to the Newsletter as LAFF president still hold true: “When all is said and done... LAFF is a membership organization and the membership is its fundamental strength. I urge each of you to reach out to colleagues who are not yet members and encourage them to join. And I ask each of you to please give us your feedback. LAFF is yours, and it is incumbent on each of us to make it the best that it can be.”

In his introduction of me as LAFF’s new president in the November 2009 Newsletter, then editor and founding LAFF member **Will Hertz** wrote: “Shep...serves on the boards of the International Peace Institute, Peace Dividend Trust and Global Fairness Initiative, among other pro bono activities. He is writing a book about his lifelong engagement with East Timor, managing his retractable bed company in Brazil <www.camaflage-brasil.com>, and reveling in his 42-year marriage to Leona.”

On each of those boards, I introduced a self-imposed ten-year exit rule in the interest of revitalization. Coming on ten years as president of LAFF, it is time to recognize the extreme privilege and honor it has been to serve, to welcome Betsy and Suzanne and wish them well, and to return to active membership. I am simultaneously passing my retractable bed company to new ownership so that I can finally finish the book on East Timor and continue to revel in my now 51-year marriage to Leona.

As the Makassae people in East Timor say as they are setting off, *Uru-uateda guba eè!* (May Moon-Sun remain with you!). I look forward to joining you for the next LAFF meeting in New York City on March 21.

Shep



AMONG THE MAKASSAE IN EAST TIMOR

By Shepard Forman

Above: The author records a Makassae funeral in 1974

The author delivered a paper at the Timor Studies Association meeting in Brasilia in July in which he recounted his experiences as a young research anthropologist in that island nation and discussed how, ultimately, “East Timor/Timor-Leste has been a central part of my personal and professional life for the past 60 years.”

This article is an excerpt from that paper, demonstrating an awareness that his early studies were prompted by “the idea of an indigenous people ensnared in the vicissitudes of colonialism”, and by the realization that “history and reality connected in some indefinable way with my own....As a first-generation American, born to Jewish parents whose families fled the pogroms of imperial Russia, I grew up fascinated and concerned with my own marginality and how groups of people became excluded from or, in our case, more fully integrated into national political, economic and social systems.”

His studies and desires led him eventually to Quelicai, a Timor community “snuggled” in the east-central Mate Bian range.

The complete paper appears on LAFF’s website. This excerpt illustrates his understanding of how “I as a person—my background, beliefs and behaviors—and the presence of our family became a part of the place and circumstances I had set out to ‘objectively’ study.... Our presence disturbed the nature of things and has to be part of the story.”

From a research perspective, Quelicai fit the requirements of my proposal. The second largest ethno-linguistic group in Timor, the Makassae, were the last of the major ethno-linguistic groups to be “pacified” and maintained a strong self-identity. The Quelicai post was small and remote, its relative unimportance in the colonial scheme of things evident in the recent appointment of a young, freshly minted, native Makassae administrator from Ossu. A seasonably passable road, completed only in 1958, dead-ended at a church and school beyond which rose the imposing Mate Bian range where the Makassae lived, worked their terraced rice paddies and root gardens, and conducted their daily and ritual lives largely beyond the reach and interest of the colonial authorities.

There, I thought, it should be possible to disentangle the parallel native and colonial systems of exchange and social hierarchy, to better understand how they intersect. In many ways, that proved to be true. The few connecting pathways—language, religion, administrative oversight, taxation—were narrow and markedly superficial. A few “assimilated” Makassae lived and worked within the Quelicai nucleus as teacher, nurse and *segunda-linha*, the much-disparaged and unarmed native police force.

We went about the business of settling in, learning the language, observing agricultural practices, comprehending the barter economy, documenting the complex and difficult process of house-building and ensuring the basics for our well-being. A series of young guides led me up the mountain paths to

diverse lineage sites where dominant grave sites provided first hints of the centrality of ancestors in the Makassae belief system.

References to Mate Bian, “where the souls danced”, intrigued me, as did a discussion of the need to propitiate a spirit that inhabited an extinct volcano that we had inappropriately ascended with our children while early accompanying the post administrator on the annual census-taking.

Eventually, I contracted an elderly teacher who I thought could best introduce me to Makassae beliefs and practice beyond the everyday activities I was able to witness. Nanaïe Nau Naua, who I later learned was the keeper of myths and traditions in his own agnatic lineage, came to our house each morning for language lessons that included kinship terminologies for living relatives and the nomenclature of marital exchanges and associated gift giving. Over time, we took long walks into the hills where I would inquire about patterns of land use and inheritance, agricultural rituals and Makassae beliefs about propagation of the land.

It soon became clear that marital exchange, social obligations and reciprocities were integral to lineage structure and alliances, but my inquiries and Nanaïe’s responses were strictly limited by the Makassae taboo against naming the dead outside of ritual contexts. I was ethically bound to respect the restrictions placed on fieldwork, but increasingly frustrated by my inability to penetrate the Makassae belief system and question the profound connections between ritual, belief and practice.

Continued on next page

About eight months into our stay in Quelicai, now settled into our house, our obligations to the house-builders fulfilled, our garden planted, our chicken coop full, our pigs fattened and our goat giving milk, we took leave of Quelicai to lecture at American National University in Canberra and take care of some nagging health issues. Our trip coincided with the Passover holiday and Derek Freeman invited us to join him at a community Seder hosted by the Israeli Embassy in Canberra.

When we returned to Quelicai, there was a noticeable change in atmospherics as though by coming back we had demonstrated a commitment and purpose that the Makassae seem to welcome. Nanai'e himself was more open and inquisitive and invited me to accompany him to a barlaque and a "gift to the grave" ceremony.

At one point he spotted on our table a copy of the Haggadah that we brought back from the seder and was immediately curious about the cover drawings of Hebrew scribes who, barefoot and draped in simple cloths, seemed to remind him of himself and other Makassae elders. He asked me what was written in the two distinct Hebrew and English scripts. I told him the book was written in our ritual and everyday language and used to transmit the history of our people across generations. Excited, Nanai'e cut short our lesson and hurried back in the direction of his ancestral hearth, returning the next morning with a group of elders.

Examining the Haggadah, the elders asked for further explanation and wondered whether I could write a "Haggadah" for them so that they could pass the myths and traditions on to their children. Recalling my training in phonetic script, I said that I could but would need to learn from them what should be transcribed.

Led by the senior Koo Rubi, they agreed that I would need to attend their marriage and mortuary rituals, record the origin myth and map a genealogy from Uru-uato, the Moon-Sun supreme deity, across generations to Nanai'e and his only son. They would speak the names of the spirit ancestors until they determined it was time to placate them and secret their names again with the sacrifice of a ram whose horn turned twice. Nanai'e was to be my teacher, and I would teach his son how to read the phonetic script.

What followed was a fieldworker's dream come true. Now Nanai'e could openly relate the origin myth, recounting how a wren flew down from the top of Mate Bian to the sacred site of Turanaba'a, kicked back the flood waters, broke his leg, turned to rock and nestled in a branch of the giant banyan tree.

Uru-Uato's hermaphroditic son followed the wren down the mountain, split into a brother and a sister who incestuously bore a baby boy and baby girl. They procreated as their parents had done and gave their son to the childless founder of Ka'o Si, Nanai'e's house of origin.

From there, Nanai'e explained the formation and structure of his agnatic lineage, carefully reconstructing his genealogical and affinal ties to other lineages through ancestors who moved down the mountainside in a process of fission and alliance that gave rise to the present clusters of Makassae descent groups.

Production and reproduction were intricately interwoven in a Makassae life paradigm expressed through the idiom of exchange. Wife-takers' bride payments of water buffalo, horses and swords (the means of production) were reciprocated with wife-givers' gifts of boiled rice and pork, bead necklaces and woven cloths (symbols of reproduction).

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Annual "giving to the grave rituals" culminated several decades after death in the Umu Gini, or "making of the dead", when the soul of the deceased was dispatched to Mate Bian to dance forever among the ancestral spirits. The exchange of gifts at this quintessential ritual mirrored the exchanges among wife-givers and wife-takers, cementing lineage alliances across generations.

Just as I felt the need to question more, Nanai'e declared I knew all that I needed to know, and announced it was time to secret the names again. On the day of the ceremony, our gardener led the ram and me to Turanaba'a where a large group of men were gathered, preparing for the sacrifice. The elders sat on the imposing tombstone and called for me to join them. I hurried over and sat down in an available space when Koo Rubi unceremoniously shouted for me to get up and change places. I had inadvertently sat on the stone marking Uru-Uato's son's burial place. The faux pas seemed to pass without further recrimination as Nanai'e proceeded with his improvised incantation:

"This stranger came and we were obliged to speak your names so he could write them in his notes and books. I told this American, 'Ours are sacred. We cannot speak them idly. After speaking them we must secret them

again. We must make them sacred again.' Therefore, this American brought this ram to our hearth to secret your name. Now we put your word in its place again. Your name is sacred again, and also your person."

Days later, a banaleke (a venomous pit viper) appeared wrapped around a chair in our house and was unceremoniously dispatched by our gardener. The elders declared it unprecedented. The snake was a messenger sent to remind me that I had sat in a sacred place and required another sacrifice, this time of a pig, to propitiate Uru-Uato's son.

A date was set for the sacrifice, but before the time came, a fire broke out in one of the lineage houses and spread quickly across the mountainside, destroying dozens of others and, in Turanaba'a, the sacred houses of the founders. A divination was required, according to Nanai'e, to determine the cause of the blaze, ostensibly a spark from a cooking pot left unattended while the occupant went to market.

I attended the divination with some trepidation, fearing the ancestor's displeasure would finger me as the cause. But as Nanai'e laid out a circle of 26 stones, none was named for me, and the young rooster that had not yet sung, died across the very stone named for the lineage house of the unattended cooking pot.

I was spared, but the fieldwork was not. The names were secreted, as were the rituals to which I was no longer invited. We spent our days completing household questionnaires and recording losses from the fire—a sword, a lipa, a spoon, a sack of rice stored for sowing.

We anticipated our descent from Mate Bian and our return to the United States, where I took up a new post as professor of Anthropology, Latin American and Southeast Asian studies at the University of Michigan.

After Indonesia invaded East Timor, Mate Bian, the last region to be pacified by the Portuguese, also became the center of East Timorese resistance. It bore the brunt of intense fighting beyond the terror that all of East Timor experienced. The last message I received from Quelicai, in late January or early February 1976, was from Nanai'e. Written in Makassae in the phonetic script I taught his son, it read: "There is no food. We are all dying. Please help us!"

I sent food and seed, not sure to where, and appealed to the International Red Cross for information. The ethnography and Haggadah seemed purposeless, and I turned from academia to activism, joining the Ford Foundation as director of programs in Human Rights and Governance, where I hoped to have more practical influence. ■

Shep Forman has been president of The LAFF Society since 2009.

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Goldman, who worked in the National Affairs office of the Ford Foundation from 1968 to 1982, died October 7. He was 97.

"We were good friends and colleagues on a number of social justice projects," said **Sanford Jaffe**, whose tenure at Ford in the Government and Law program overlapped Goldman's time.

"He was a person of extraordinary perspective, good humor and exceptional talent. Bob always knew what the right thing to do was and what to say that would be important and meaningful to the community."

Mr. Goldman was born in Germany in 1921 and came to America in 1939. After studying Spanish and journalism at night at Columbia University he became a German-language announcer at the Voice of America, rising eventually to be manager of the news room.

He left to work for the State Department's Alliance for Progress, a coordinating body for aid and support for Latin America, and then, before joining Ford, worked in the newly formed Human Resources Administration in New York City.

When he left Ford he ran a professional foundation for three smaller institutions for the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and then went to Paris to be European director of the Anti-Defamation League. While in Europe he wrote a column for the International Herald-Tribune.

He continued to write after he retired, contributing columns and analyses on diverse political and social subjects to publications in this country and Europe.

His wife of 66 years, Eva, died in 2014. He is survived by a son and two daughters.

Enid Schoettle, who in an 18-year career at the Ford Foundation oversaw a multitude of programs in international affairs with a focus on multi-lateral global initiatives, most notably nuclear disarmament, died October 18 at the age of 79.

Ms. Schoettle began working at Ford in 1976 as a program officer in the European and International Affairs office, and in 1981 was named program officer in charge of International Affairs.

She became director of the International Affairs program in 1987, then director and senior counsel on foreign relations in 1991 until leaving Ford in 1994.

She graduated with honors from Radcliffe College, where she studied history, and taught political science at Swarthmore College before studying at the Massachu-

setts Institute of Technology and earning a doctorate in political science. She taught at the University of Minnesota before going to work at the Ford Foundation.

After leaving Ford she went to work for the federal government as a member of the National Intelligence Council as its first National Intelligence Officer for Global and Multilateral Issues, receiving the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal in 1996 for her work there.

For two years she worked at the United Nations as chief of the Advocacy and External Relations Unit of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, then returned to the federal government in 1998 as Consultant and Special Advisor to the chairman of the National Intelligence Council.

After she retired in 2004 she became a member of the Board of Directors of the Henry L. Stimson Center, the Advisory Board of Women in International Security, the American Society of International Law and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Her first marriage ended in divorce and in 1990 she married Herbert S. Okun, who had been United States ambassador to East Germany and deputy ambassador to the United Nations. He died in 2011. She is survived by two sons and six grandchildren.

Patrick Corrigan, who worked in a variety of positions in the Foundation's Comptroller's Office for 34 years and was an early member of the fledgling LAFF Society, died July 1. He was 90 years old.

Mr. Corrigan, a graduate of St. John's University, began working at Ford in 1960 as an accountant. Through successive appointments until his retirement in 1994, he was senior accountant, assistant chief accountant, manager of Programs and Payables Accounting, manager of Grants and Disbursements and manager of Grants Accounting.

After retirement he volunteered for several organizations, "fueled," noted his obituary, "by social activity." He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Cornerstone Group, the Golden Ages, the Closter (N.J.) Seniors and the Mr. and Mrs. Club.

He loved to travel, noted the obituary, and indulged frequently in his love of Broadway shows, casino trips and story-telling. "He was well-known," it said, "for his good company, bargain findings, driving directions, bad jokes and generous cocktails."

His wife of 45 years, Margaret, died in 2001. He was pre-deceased by one daughter, and two others and a son survive him, as do five grandchildren. ■

LAFFing Parade

Roland V. Anglin has been elected a fellow of the National Academy of Political Science (NAPA), an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit organization chartered by the United States Congress to help "government leaders solve their most critical management challenges".

NAPA "evaluates the structure, administration and operation of government agencies, identifying significant problems and suggesting timely corrective action. Though it works primarily in the United States, the academy's reach extends to governance challenges around the world".



Election to the academy is considered "one of the highest honors for those engaged in the study or practice of public administration". Fellows include former cabinet officers, members of Congress, governors, mayors and state legislators as well as prominent scholars, business executives and public administrators.

Among the issues they deal with are performance measurements in government, attracting and retaining top talent, and using technology to improve public sector effectiveness.

"I am honored to be a part of an organization that has been at the forefront of modernizing government practice and enhancing democratic participation in governance," Anglin said of his election. "At the same time, I am humbled by the high caliber of colleagues on the professional staff and the roster of fellows."

Anglin is the dean of the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University and worked at the Ford Foundation from 1991 to 1999 in the Community and Resource Development and Urban Poverty programs.

Prior to going to Cleveland State, he was senior advisor to the chancellor and director

KEEP MARCH 21 OPEN

Our new co-presidents, **Betsy Campbell** and **Suzanne Siskel**, will be introduced at a gathering March 21 at the renovated Ford headquarters building in New York City.

A reception will be held for members from 5 to 6:30, and there will be a chance to tour the building, which The New York Times has called "a singular gift to the city".

Let Nellie Toma know you're coming, at treasurer@laffsociety.org

of the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies at the Rutgers University campus in Newark, N.J.

Earlier in his career he was founding executive director of the Initiative for Regional and Community Transformation at the Edward J. Blaustein School of Planning and Public Policy of Rutgers University, and senior vice president of the Structured Employment Economic Development Corporation.

He has a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College, a master's from Northwestern University and a doctorate from the University of Chicago, all in political science.

As the city of New Orleans celebrates its tricentennial, **Linetta Gilbert** is one of 300 residents cited for having "made New Orleans New Orleans".

The city's newspaper, The Times-Picayune, created a project it calls "300 for 300" and commissioned a portrait of each person chosen. Gilbert, noted the paper, "is re-writing the rules of philanthropy, showing us that it isn't restricted to people with fat checkbooks who donate to already-flush organizations".

Instead, says the paper, she "has worked to strengthen community-based philanthropic organizations, such as the Greater New



Orleans Foundation, to build community strength and enhance the overall quality of life.

"In addition to getting money to organizations that need it, Gilbert also works to strengthen the boards that run these

enterprises, to enhance the diversity of board membership and to make New Orleans a better, stronger and more resilient city."

Gilbert has achieved such renown as founder and managing partner of Gilbert & Associates, a New Orleans-based firm that shows companies nationwide how to achieve their goals. She was also a founding board member of the Foundation for Louisiana, a statewide charity designed to build stronger communities; of Agenda for Children; and of the Louisiana Children's Museum.

While at the Ford Foundation, from 2001 to 2010, she was the senior program officer in the Social Justice Philanthropy program, where she oversaw the investment and monitoring of some \$1 billion in Ford resources to transform and strengthen community-based philanthropic organizations throughout the world.

She created her consulting firm after leaving Ford, using it to "design and facilitate strategic planning and retreats, and to provide coaching for non-profit and government

VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Many of our members post photos on our Facebook page, personal notes on their lives and work, that are well worth checking out. Recent additions include:

Lia Sciortino, whose article on funding problems in Southeast Asia appears in this issue on page 8, celebrated her birthday in New York City with several Foundation friends.

Lia also posted pictures of herself and **Peter Weldon** meeting in Bangkok.

Allen Jenkins posted a picture of his daughter, who has received a prestigious honor as a student at Harvard University.

We have a photograph of the Cairo office staff in 1986 at a luncheon saying farewell to **Judy Barsalou**.

And there are many pictures of LAFF events that have been written about in the newsletter over the past year, including the New York City chapter's event in May, **Radhika Balakrishnan's** participation in a forum at the Carter Center and the retirement party of **Dianne DeMaria**.

There is always room on our Facebook page for members who want to share moments in their lives. ■



Lia Sciortino holds the cake at her birthday celebration.



Cairo staff says good-bye to Judy Barsalou, front row center, in 1986.

executives to enhance community leadership and philanthropic investment in community development in the 21st century".

The newspaper noted, in writing of her selection, that "She talked about how philanthropy is re-tooling, that issues around social justice are again up for conversation and that we have more assets and resources than in the past.

"She told us to always look at an issue from

the standpoint of the local level, stretch yourself, recognize that our jobs are to be talent scouts and to err on the side of the person who has a good idea." ■

CORRECTION

An affiliation of **Akwasi Aidoo** was listed incorrectly in the LAFFing Parade section of the newsletter's Summer 2018 issue. He has been director of TrustAfrica.



Protesters clash with police in Kuala Lumpur. Photograph: Mohd Hafiz Noor Shams.

WIELDING THE PURSE STRINGS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

By Rosalia Sciortino

This is a condensed version of an article that appears in its entirety on the website of New Mandala, a news and opinion online publication sponsored by the Australian National University, and can be accessed at www.new-mandala.org/weilding-purse-strings/

As democracy experiences a global decline, and Southeast Asia oscillates between authoritarian endurance and democratic rollback, civil society in the region is facing a bleak future.

Dictatorships and quasi-democracies are racing to curtail freedom of speech and assembly and to subject civil society organizations (CSOs)—especially those advocating structural changes and human rights—to ever-tightening regulatory requirements.

Across Southeast Asia, governments' stiffened oversight is limiting access to international and national funds by CSOs, in particular when directed at financing advocacy and rights-based activities. This occurs amidst an evolving development aid landscape wherein established donor agencies reposition themselves in line with more conservative contexts back home and abroad, and where a new set of funders does not necessarily appreciate the merit of a "vibrant civil society" for democracy and development....the general result is that civil society in Southeast Asia is losing its conventional backers without finding the same level of support among alternative donors, affecting its ability to play a critical and transformative role.

Tightened government control

Governments in Southeast Asia have generally been apprehensive of CSOs challenging the status quo and uncomfortable with their mission of "safeguarding democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms" and of "empowering" the marginalized.

An exception has been the Philippines. Uniquely in the region, the 1987 Philippine constitution affirms the societal contribution of non-profit entities, foresees financial support for organizations that promote social welfare and stipulates for them a range of fiscal exemptions.

The 2015 Index of Philanthropy Freedom found the region, and Asia more generally, to be below the global average in terms of ease of registering, financing and operating CSOs. Examples include Malaysia's employment of security and counterterrorism laws against NGOs and their international donors, and the impossibility in Vietnam for advocacy and human rights organizations to register and thus to legitimately receive funding.

Prominent in the growth of more-stick-than-carrot regulations are measures to control CSO resources. Governments in Southeast Asia, like in other conservative parts of the world, are becoming more adept in employing financial tools for repressive purposes, from withholding public funds and limiting the type of CSO activities that can be funded, to taxing donations, requiring donors to register with state agencies and applying anti-money laundering, trafficking and, more recently, anti-terrorism financing

measures at their discretion.

Government-backed grant-making foundations, a hybrid kind of institution consisting of public funding and semi-independent management with a significant presence in Southeast Asia, are at high risk of direct intervention. In 2016, Thailand's government tightened its control of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, the largest donor in the country, which is funded with tobacco revenues.

Heightened scrutiny is placed upon funding from foreign donors, "a particularly insidious means to narrow the space for civil society [... in] an environment where significant domestic funding for CSOs is absent" or minimal. Grantee organizations are vilified for being "foreign agents" paid to advocate a "Western agenda" dismissive of Asian values, and in extreme cases are accused of treason and criminalized.

Across Southeast Asia, past agreements and permission procedures for foreign donors and international NGOs (INGOs) to operate in various countries are being reviewed and there is greater examination of these institutions and the activities they are funding.

As generally risk-averse actors, multilateral and bilateral donors and larger INGOs are sensitive to local political climates and quickly adjust to government signals. Meanwhile, more independent foundations and smaller INGOs struggle to find new channels to continue supporting groups and causes now considered undesirable.

To start with, funding opportunities for CSOs are declining as the overall amount

of official development aid (ODA) from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor countries is being cut and diversely allocated.

A hostile aid landscape

In the resulting prioritization of foreign assistance, Southeast Asia as a whole has scored low, considered by some of its major donors (most of all the United States, Europe and Canada, but most recently also Australia) to have lower strategic and economic value compared to other regions. Its fast growth has also been seen as a validation of its readiness to “graduate” from aid and used to justify reduced support, notwithstanding growing inequities, persistent vulnerabilities and unresolved development challenges.

This scaling back and repositioning of foreign assistance has in turn implied a commercialization of aid objectives, delivery systems and development partners, which has correspondingly meant moving away from civil society and from the role envisioned for CSOs since the late 1980s. At that time, DAC donors started to provide official funding to the non-profit sector and enlisted INGOs in their countries to work overseas as a prerequisite for development programs..”

Yet such repeated commitments have only partly materialized in Southeast Asia.... Governments have now started to procure education, healthcare and other basic services from NGOs to enhance access to out of reach groups, although levels of such procurement are still low in Southeast Asia when compared to South and East Asia.

More fundamentally, the pro-CSO development paradigm is increasingly being challenged by the rise of pro-market ideologies and the closer integration of aid and trade, which encourage economic solutions and approaches in development. This is exemplified by current donor support to ASEAN to foster women’s empowerment, which emphasizes women’s entrepreneurship and enterprises as instrumental to economic growth while placing less emphasis on supporting women’s rights groups, building feminist movements, changing cultural norms and enhancing women’s political participation to achieve gender equality.

At the global level, the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while acknowledging civil society’s contribution, gives an unprecedented role to the private sector “as an engine of economic growth and employment and a source of finance, technology and innovation” and trusts public-private partnerships for achieving sustainable development. In a newfound framework, reminiscent of early postcolonial modern-

ization endeavors, the trickle-down effect of economic growth is seen as the driver of sustainable development.

The new mission is fostering a “vibrant private sector”—rather than a “vibrant civil society”—of small and medium enterprises and socially responsible corporations, upon which sustainable development and trade performance is assumed to rest. Among donors, the hype is now for social enterprises: traditionally non-profit, but increasingly for-profit organizations that apply commercial strategies to attain social and environmental as well as financial outcomes.

More and more, private entities, trusted to be more efficient than the non-profit ones, are enlisted as “implementers” of foreign aid to help governments reach the set targets. In the resulting multi-layered aid industry of mainly private contractors and facilities....local NGOs are expected to bid for a project or respond to calls for proposals rather than initiate activities, and eventually are employed as sub-contractors to deliver services on commission.

In Southeast Asia, like in the rest of the world, changes in the development sector towards being “narrowly focused on short-term results and values for money” is taking away resources and autonomy from civil society and compromising its ability to strive for social justice and transformation.

Yet even the diminished level of DAC donors’ engagement with civil society may still appear substantial when compared to the dismissive attitude of non-DAC countries operating in Southeast Asia—especially China, India and Middle Eastern countries. Since these emerging donors are responsible for a growing aid share globally and in the region, their practices do not bode well for the future of NGOs and other CSOs.

China’s denial of a development role for civil society matters the most due to its prominent and expanding reach. A latecomer to development assistance, since 2005 China has ramped up bilateral and regional aid along with loans from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other financial incentives under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), surpassing most traditional aid donor countries. Southeast Asia, due to its proximity to China, its ethnic Chinese diaspora and its abundant natural resources, is a priority area for Chinese aid.

From the start, Chinese foreign aid has been heavily skewed towards economic measures, a blurring of aid and financial investments and loans, and delivery through private-sector or state-owned enterprises, with few socio-cultural projects and almost inexistent funding of NGOs. The ideological disjointing of economic growth from civil liberties and democracy, expressed in

no-strings-attached and hands-off aid policies, is welcomed by increasingly authoritarian regimes, but clearly precludes a meaningful role for civil society.

Philanthropy and civil society: from foundation darlings to orphans?

Historically, international foundations sponsored the establishment and strengthening of civic institutions and movements in Southeast Asia much earlier and at a higher level than bilateral and multilateral donors. Beginning in the Cold War period, U.S. foundations—foremost among these the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation—engaged with countries in the region with the aim to assist them to “take off” on the development and democratization path.

Starting in the 1950s, the Rockefeller Foundation placed staff in local institutions and the Ford Foundation established country offices across the region with the idea that proximity was necessary to understand the context and to grant strategically.

Early on, philanthropic foundations’ support facilitated the decolonization of government institutions, strengthening incipient governance structures and public services, technology transfer and foreign know-how. Western institutions were entrusted to build or strengthen local universities and educate the emerging national leadership in country and abroad, as well as create a pool of technical personnel, teachers and administrators. INGOs, mainly from the U.S., were also funded to establish chapters or help build local organizations in the selected program areas such as population, health, agriculture and governance.

During the 1970s and 1980s, as international foundations adopted a more holistic and bottom-up paradigm, more and more NGOs were provided capacity building and long-term funding to address the social and cultural dimensions of development and to spearhead community programs in disadvantaged areas. By the 1990s the principles of “participation”, “empowerment” and “local ownership” were firmly established among international foundations, and grants were directed to local organizations as the best positioned to find systemic and context-specific solutions to complex societal challenges, including fostering more open and accountable governments.

As dictatorships came to an end and optimism about democracy bloomed in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, civil society mushroomed. International foundations.... funded activities to raise awareness of human rights, women’s rights and minority rights.

This social justice-oriented model of
Continued on next page

philanthropy was challenged in the early 2000s by the emergence of a new brand of foundations—including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest foundation ever with an endowment of \$40.3 billion in 2017, about double that of the Open Society Foundations and almost four times that of the Ford Foundation....

In line with the thinking in development aid circles, the so-called venture philanthropy—or, more critically, “philanthrocapitalism”—reframes the modernization discourse in globalization terms, putting faith in the expansion of markets and innovations to drive worldwide development.

In this view, development is conceived as overcoming a knowledge deficit caused by a scarcity of resources, which requires technocratic and financial acumen rather than socio-cultural and political change. Efforts are therefore directed at the discovery of universal “magic bullets” that, if combined with adequate joint investment from foundations and the corporate sector, can be applied globally and lead to development results and monetary gains simultaneously.

Focus is on attaining scientific progress in health and agriculture, with little appreciation of “soft” and less quantifiable fields of human rights, culture and the arts.

The decline of socially-engaged and contextual grant-making endangers the position of civil society as the primary partner of international foundations. New foundations privilege public-private partnerships and working with the private sector. When they involve NGOs, it is to deliver services with the expectation that they operate according to “entrepreneurial” principles. Like aid donors, they too are fond of social enterprises (especially if fully business ones) and have spearheaded “social impact investment” to sustain them and seek social benefits and financial returns.

Meanwhile the “traditional” U.S. foundations, even when not fully subscribing to the technocratic paradigm, have modified their modus operandi and show less appreciation for local contexts and actors. Operations have been centralized in headquarters and, with the notable exception of the Open Society, field offices have been closed or reduced to logistic hubs.

Most revealingly, of the many Ford Foundation offices in Southeast Asia only the Indonesia office remains open. With these and related changes in philanthropy, CSOs are at risk of becoming the “orphans” rather than being the “darlings” of international foundations as they used to be in the past.

The limits of local benefactors

Confronted with diminishing international



“Promoting Transparent, Effective and Accountable Government”—from the Ford Foundation’s Indonesia country report.

resources, civil society has placed high hopes on being able to tap into home-grown philanthropy. At first sight, such hopes seem justified....observers agree that the Southeast Asian philanthropic sector has undergone robust growth in the last two decades, driven by the fast accumulation of wealth, greater societal pressure for corporate accountability, and a slightly more conducive policy environment.

These new funding opportunities, however, have yet to translate into regular and sustainable support to civil society....home-grown philanthropy at this stage of its development is generally not inclined towards social change approaches—and refrains from becoming involved with CSOs, especially if advocating human rights.

Home-grown philanthropy is dominated by family corporate foundations and, even more commonly, corporate giving programs operated through informal or corporate channels. The number of independent private foundations, albeit increasing, remains relatively low. Intermingling of business interests and philanthropic objectives is rife, with giving tied to the family business and directed at enhancing its scope and reputation. The inclination is to work to advance social causes perceived as non-controversial and to support governments’ agendas in order to avoid potential conflicts that may eventually affect business interests.

In carrying out their missions, corporate family foundations mix grant-making with direct implementation and fundraising for

their own program, thus reducing funding opportunities for resource-poor organizations. When they provide finances externally, they rarely consider proposals, and their preference is to give at their will to those they personally know in academic, business or government circles. They generally mistrust non-profits, which they perceive as not transparent and accountable, and have enthusiastically adopted venture philanthropy with its emphasis on social enterprises and impact investment.

The same giving and beneficiary pattern also characterizes the region’s faith-based institutions, albeit for different reasons. These precursors of institutionalized giving in Southeast Asia are far more numerous, and with greater resources and reach, compared to corporate initiatives.

In their charity, faith-based institutions prioritize religious deeds and alleviating the suffering of the poor, the sick, orphans, migrants and other vulnerable groups. They also contribute to community development, provide humanitarian aid, deliver health, education and welfare services, and undertake relief programs. But their humanitarian approach is often sectarian and rarely strives for structural change. Like their corporate counterparts they rarely engage in policy discussions and human rights issues and privilege NGOs that deliver services, rather than advocacy organizations.

Southeast Asia needs civil society, and civil society needs support

The collective dismissal of the advocacy function of CSOs has far-reaching consequences, since there is no doubt that the upholding of humanistic and social justice ideals is still very much needed today. With the strengthening of fundamentalist and nationalist discourses, curtailment of basic freedoms, and growing socioeconomic disparities in the region, questions of equitable, inclusive and democratic development are even more pressing.

If democratic regression and the undermining of civil society is to be halted, it is to be hoped that individual and institutional donors, both local and international, see the wisdom of ensuring more bold and socially-engaged funding. ■

The author was a Ford Foundation program officer in Jakarta and Manila from 1993 to 2000, teaches at Mahidol and Chulalongkorn universities in Thailand and is founder and director of SEA Junction, a cultural center in Bangkok that fosters understanding and appreciation of Southeast Asia. She formerly was regional director for Asia of the Rockefeller Foundation, based in Bangkok, and of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in Singapore.

WHERE ARE ALL THE AMERICAN ORCHESTRA CONDUCTORS?

This article appeared in The New York Times on September 14 and is reprinted here with permission.

By George Gelles

Before winning acclaim as a virtuoso composer and a charismatic popularizer of classical music, Leonard Bernstein attained fame as a conductor. In 1943, still green at 25 and assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic, he took the podium as a last-minute stand-in for an ailing Bruno Walter. With no rehearsal and everything on the line, he saved the day and gained celebrity overnight.

Our major orchestras had long been in thrall to maestros from abroad, but Mr. Bernstein proved himself the equal of older, foreign-born conductors. “A good American success story” is how *The New York Times* described his triumph.

Mr. Bernstein was not only an anomaly but also an upstart, an American interloper on European turf. Yet, 75 years after his success, we might wonder why his breakthrough has led, perhaps, to a dead end. In a country as vast as ours and as artistically rich in home-grown talent, why have so few American music directors followed in his footsteps?

As we embark on a new season of concerts, a look at our leading orchestras reveals a situation similar to 1943. When Mr. Bernstein shot to fame, each of the so-called Big Five orchestras, in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and Cleveland, was led by a foreign music director (born, respectively, in Poland, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Belgium and Austria), as is each today (with conductors from the Netherlands, Latvia, Canada, Italy and Austria).

Orchestras in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Los Angeles and even in Washington are led by conductors from Austria, France, Venezuela and Italy. To find American music directors at larger orchestras, you must look to, among other locations, San Francisco, Atlanta and, until recently, St. Louis.

There’s no questioning the credentials of music directors from abroad; they are generally impeccable. But these men—yes, regrettably they are all men—had an avenue for advancement that is unavailable to most aspiring Americans: As apprentices, most honed their craft into art at one of the opera houses that, since the eighteenth century, have spread throughout Europe. Starting as a *répétiteur*—a pianist who plays at rehearsals and coaches singers in their roles, who serves

as assistant conductor prepping an orchestra for performance and who, perhaps, matures to full-fledged conductor, learning and leading a stylistically wide swath of repertoire—the young European can be immersed in music-making to an extent only envied by most Americans.

A fledgling conductor in the United States might be groomed at one of our exceptional conservatories, independent or university based, but must find a different path to prominence and must overcome an attitude that undervalues musical excellence among native-born conductors.

Have you heard of “The Cultural Cringe”, a seminal 1950 essay by the Australian writer A.A. Phillips? The term, which he coined, refers to an inferiority complex that causes people to overvalue artists in other countries and undervalue those in their own. Mr. Phillips was writing of Australian artists—writers, painters, actors, musicians—and their difficulties being judged on their own merits and not measured adversely in comparison

Orchestras in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Los Angeles and even in Washington are led by conductors from Austria, France, Venezuela and Italy.

with British counterparts. Nowadays, cultural cringe has made it into academe, where examples of the phenomenon are examined by social anthropologists.

In America, while other artistic disciplines rightly take pride in our leading practitioners, our major orchestras are unique in favoring conductors of Continental or Asian lineage. Among the Big Five, only the New York Philharmonic chose an American as its founding music director, while the others chose foreigners. And post-Bernstein, few Americans have been entrusted with prominent ensembles. Among them are stars that shone brilliantly, including David Robertson, Alan Gilbert, Kenneth Schermerhorn, Thomas Schippers, Gerard Schwarz, Leonard Slatkin and Robert Spano.

Michael Tilson Thomas, Los Angeles born and bred, is the longest-tenured music director of a major American orchestra. He will end a quarter-century with the San Francisco Symphony in 2020, having unquestionably shown that an American can lead an orchestra to the pinnacle of international success.

One explanation of the current situation

comes from Hugh Wolff, the former music director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and currently chief conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra, as well as director of orchestras and teacher of conducting at the New England Conservatory of Music. Though born abroad to Foreign Service parents, he received a blue-ribbon schooling in the United States.

Mr. Wolff noted that American orchestras’ hiring of foreign maestros “has kind of been the case for many, many years. But some of us work more in Europe than in the States, which sometimes surprises people. So there’s a free flow of goods and services. Of course, I wish there were more young American conductors, but I’m seeing young conductors from all over the world at our festivals and music schools.”

Mr. Wolff continued: “The whole art form of concerts, and of orchestras in classical music, is not part of the educational curriculum any more, not part of what young people are expected to learn, and therein lies the nub of the problem.”

A different perspective comes from James Blachly, a generation younger than Mr. Wolff and music director of two ensembles: the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra, in southwestern Pennsylvania, and the New York-based Experiential Orchestra, which he founded. He came to conducting in his late 20s, and rather than pursue a conservatory education, he found mentors and apprenticeships at home and abroad.

“There’s still this idea that you can become an assistant conductor with a major orchestra and get a big break and your career can take off, but the traditional path no longer applies,” Mr. Blachly said. “The Big Five is one thing, and sure, if the Berlin Philharmonic called, I’d be on the next plane, but there are a lot of other orchestras out there. And for many young conductors, the new route is to start your own ensemble.”

The larger question remains: Where are our American conductors and how do they reach the top tier?

Well, you can win a prestigious competition, though most are Europe-based and worldwide in focus, with American contestants heavily outnumbered.

More realistically, there are two stages on which young conductors are welcomed: They are our largest and most prestigious orchestras, those included in Group A by the League of
Continued on next page

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Gelles

Continued from page 11

American Orchestras, an organization that advocates on behalf of its membership. These ensembles often engage Americans as assistant or associate conductors, where their role is the ever-ready understudy, but where they might conduct pops concerts and a youth orchestra.

Orchestras in Groups B through E, with smaller budgets, shorter seasons and less clout, also engage young Americans, often as music directors, though their exposure, inevitably, is limited.

The league is making an effort to bring gifted young conductors before orchestra managements and artist representatives. This past April, in collaboration with the Nashville Symphony, the league hosted the Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview. (That's the same Bruno Walter, of course, whose illness enabled Leonard Bernstein's fortuitous debut.)

The promise implicit in Mr. Bernstein's success will be fulfilled only when the agents who manage a maestro's career collaborate with symphony managements in a conscious effort to place gifted Americans on the most prestigious podiums. Working closely with an orchestra's leadership and providing guidance

that might prove useful, the artist's manager is essentially a salesman, analogous to a star quarterback's agent, and plays a crucial role pairing conductors with orchestras. In so doing, an ensemble's artistic fortunes and public profile are defined.

Today two agencies dominate the field: Columbia Artists Management and International Management Group Artists. Together they represent 113 conductors, of whom 24 are Americans, though nine of those make their careers in Hollywood, on Broadway or as pops concert personalities. Absent these nine, that's a skinny 13 percent of Americans, some recognizable, a majority less so.

One explanation is that foreign conductors have had more experience and more time to become better known. Another factor might be that the foreign conductor comes to an orchestra with a certain cachet and commands a significantly higher fee than the younger American, which means a fatter fee for the agent. None of this necessarily reflects on the comparative quality of performance.

The orchestral enterprise is in transition. In a generally sanguine report from the League of American Orchestras—"Orchestra Facts: 2006-2014", the most up-to-date study publicly available—it is reported that audiences declined 10.5 percent between 2010 and 2014,

and, in 2013 alone, subscription revenues fell by 13 percent.

These numbers should cause concern. Heeding signs of audience fatigue from the same-old same-old, orchestra boards and management must demand that artist managements provide choices that include the most exciting and insightful conductors, both men and women, groomed here at home and deserving the chance to shine. They need to not merely include American conductors on their rosters, but to champion their careers and advocate on their behalf.

Should there be doubt that an American maestro is up to the challenge, one need only look to the too few examples of homegrown success, to the likes of Kenneth Schermerhorn and Thomas Schippers, Robert Spano and Michael Tilson Thomas.

And, indeed, to Leonard Bernstein. ■

George Gelles has written on music and dance, served at the National Endowment for the Arts and for 15 years was executive director of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. He worked at the Ford Foundation from 1977 to 1981 in the Office of the Arts, and has written previously for the newsletter, most recently on "The Rise and Fall of the 'City at 42nd Street'" in the Winter 2018 issue.