

## Chapter II

### Responsibilities of the Music Executive

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#### Administrative Organization in Academia

In virtually all academic institutions, ultimate authority rests with a governing board, that is, trustees, regents, whatever. As a practical matter, much of the board's authority is delegated to the president, who retains as much as he or she needs to do the job and passes along the rest to the next person in the institutional chain of command, typically the provost. That person, in turn, keeps what is needed for that office and gives the rest to the deans and department chairs in this downward flow of authority in academia.

Whatever title the music executive may hold—dean, chair, and so on—the position will typically be thought of as “middle management.” Others in the academic hierarchy—president, provost, vice presidents—are seen as “upper management,” and as some cynics might view it, hardly anyone is lower than a dean.

However accurate this may be, mid-level administrative positions in higher education possess an unmistakable fragility. It stems from the fact that while we may be tenured in our *faculty* positions, at some professorial rank, we are *not* tenured in our administrative positions. We are positioned in the hierarchy *between* faculty, many or most of whom are tenured in their roles, and the upper administration, who typically are less subject to periodic, formal review. We spend much of our time in adversarial relationships with one of these groups on behalf of the other. That is, we may be pressing the upper administration on behalf of some faculty need. Where the administration wishes to send bad news to the faculty, we get to carry the message. The implication here is simply that those of us who are offered administrative positions should be tenured in our faculty positions. This recommendation holds especially true if we are expected to initiate change, or to deal with a divided faculty or with marginal or inadequate resources. You may be able to negotiate faculty tenure when you are offered an administrative position.

#### Unique Breadth of the Music Executive's Responsibilities

The old epigram that compares the workloads of men and women might be paraphrased as follows: “Most chairs work from sun to sun, but the music chair's work is never done.” You won't gain friends or sympathy by pointing this out to colleagues across the campus, but few academic disciplines present as lengthy and varied a list of administrative responsibilities as those associated with the music unit. Some of the duties may be shared or delegated, but ultimately they remain the responsibility of the music executive. Advice about how to approach these many tasks will be the subject of later chapters, but the following summary illustrates the breadth of the list.

### **Academic Responsibilities**

Design of the curriculum and development of educational policies lie at the heart of the academic enterprise and therefore play an important role in the life of the music executive. The fact that these tasks are primarily a faculty responsibility, not an administrative one, does not simplify things a great deal. In the arenas of curriculum and policy, the music executive directs the faculty and motivates them to meet their responsibilities for designing and refining curriculum, and also facilitates the work of faculty in these areas. Typically a faculty committee takes on this task, or if the institution has both undergraduate and graduate programs, then often it will be handled by two committees. The responsibilities of such committees include screening new course proposals to avoid duplication and considering their educational and financial viability. Generally, after these issues have been addressed, the committee will recommend approval by the entire music faculty. Definitions and elements of the music curriculum will be addressed in Chapter VI.

Another important academic responsibility of the music executive is student advisement. This task may take the form of advising individual students personally or assigning these responsibilities to faculty advisors, and then following up to make sure that the students are advised effectively. One problem with advising is that all faculty do not bring the same ability or the same level of commitment to the task. Done well, the academic advisement of students involves more than just “signing off” for permission to register each term. Effective advisors monitor the progress of their advisees, not only in their courses but also toward completing degree requirements. Student advisement is generally considered to be a responsibility of faculty, but it is not typically a part of the teaching load. In extreme cases, however, substituting a small increase in the teaching load may be preferable to burdening students with incompetent or uncaring advisement.

Scheduling classes and making teaching assignments is generally the responsibility of the music executive, although in larger units this task is sometimes delegated to program coordinators, whatever their titles might be. Ideally, this process will involve consultation with individual faculty members, and it usually occurs in connection with preparation of the institutional catalog or the published class schedule. The music executive must make certain that all intended courses are scheduled and staffed.

Another important aspect of scheduling is assigning an appropriate time and location for each activity, taking care to avoid, as far as possible, overlapping of classes and rehearsals that might be required of the same student populations. The most successful approach to scheduling seems to be one in which various sizes and kinds of activities are assigned to specific parts of the day. For example, lecture classes, such as music theory and music history, are often scheduled mainly during the morning hours, which are kept free of other activities. Large ensembles are placed in the late afternoon, when most classes are over. Smaller activities, such as chamber music and master classes, fit comfortably in the middle of the day. It is nearly impossible to keep everyone happy with scheduling. Most faculty prefer to avoid early morning and evening classes. On the other hand, not everything can be scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday at 10:00 a.m. Occasionally we find faculty who hate Wednesday because it interferes with both weekends.

The music executive serves, in effect, as the producer of all public performance activities, including student and faculty recitals, ensemble concerts, and guest performances. Related responsibilities include promotion and publicity, management of the facility, for example, appointment and oversight of the ushers, stage managers, and so on, and design and printing

of programs. Some or all of these tasks may be delegated to student workers or to centralized services elsewhere on campus.

While the music executive cannot take sole responsibility for maintaining musical and academic standards, he or she must take the lead in making certain that all faculty share in this responsibility. Critical points for safeguarding standards will be student admissions, juries, and public performances. It is not unreasonable to think of the music executive as the “musical conscience” of the program.

### **Faculty and Staff**

Many believe that the most important long-term responsibility of the music executive is attracting and retaining a superior faculty. Therefore, faculty searches must be carried out with the utmost care, often requiring an enormous amount of time. Responsibility does not end, moreover, with the appointment of a faculty member. The music executive must motivate and encourage all members of the faculty, an activity that generally falls under the heading of “faculty development.” This term encompasses not just the intellectual and professional growth of faculty but especially monitoring the progress of new faculty on their path to tenure. Faculty members who are younger and less experienced often benefit from a mentoring relationship with a senior member of the faculty, who will provide advice and encouragement to help smooth the way. No specific mechanisms exist for establishing such arrangements; rather, the approaches will depend on the chemistry of those involved and will almost always be informal.

Faculty effectiveness is usually measured in three areas: teaching, research and/or creative activity, and service. The amount of weight these three areas receive in connection with reappointment, tenure, and promotion will vary from one campus to another, but generally speaking, teaching and research are weighted somewhat evenly, and both are considered more important than service. For the music executive who may be entering the tenure/promotion process for the first time, it is important to be very clear about how these three areas are prioritized at your particular institution.

Quality of teaching is generally measured by student evaluation and observation by colleagues. In nonperformance areas, such as music theory, music history, and music education, research is usually defined in the traditional sense and includes scholarship and publication. In applied areas, such as performance, conducting, and composition, evaluation will center around the creative activities and their venues. That is, how many performances took place? Where did they occur? How were they judged, by critics and/or others? Service might involve work on committees of the music unit or the institution. It might also include activities within the profession or engagement with the community.

Promotion and tenure are not the only rewards and incentives for faculty, of course. Others might include preferred assignment of courses and sections, preferred scheduling, committee assignments, and so on. There probably is no clearer indication of approval than that which occurs in awarding merit-based salary increases. If an indication of “disapproval” is made, for example, by a lower-than-average salary increase, the music executive should be prepared to explain the reason. Handled skillfully, this discussion can be an opportunity to provide incentive for adjusting behavior or improving an area of performance.

### **Student-Related Responsibilities**

Student recruitment and admission, which will be treated in detail in Chapter V, is obviously a topic of great importance. In ideal circumstances, these responsibilities may be assigned to a staff member, whose title might be coordinator of admissions or something similar. Some of these tasks may be assigned to faculty members. Otherwise, they fall to the music executive. Like many of the most important duties, they can take up many hours.

The nature and importance of academic advisement of students was discussed above. Career counseling and placement services represent another type of advising. These services often take place in a centralized operation, especially in larger institutions. When such a department does not exist, the music executive may expect to invest at least some time with such activities, most likely in informal ways. Some aspects of the quality of student life also fall within the purview of the music executive. Access to and security within practice areas is one example. Another is the emotional well-being of the students. Time demands on music students, who are expected to do everything that other students do, *and then* attend rehearsals and find time to practice, can make them susceptible to stress-related emotional problems. And who must be prepared to deal, at least initially, with such problems? That is right—the music executive.

### **Managing Resources**

By now it is no doubt becoming clear that time is a very important resource of the music executive. Much of it will be spent managing the other three resource categories: human, physical, and financial. We have already noted the music executive's responsibilities related to faculty and staff. Physical resources are of two kinds: facilities and equipment, the latter including instruments. Because of the extent to which they are specially designed and equipped, music spaces—rehearsal and performance areas and some classrooms—are seldom used for nonmusic purposes.

Oversight of these discipline-specific facilities is a somewhat unique responsibility of the music executive. So also is managing the inventories of instruments and equipment, especially keyboard instruments, because of the amount of care they require just for routine adjustments and tuning. Later chapters will address in detail the human and physical resources associated with the music unit. Still another chapter will deal with the development and oversight of the music budget, which tends to be larger than budgets of most similarly sized disciplines because of the special costs of purchasing and maintaining instruments and the costs associated with public performances. Human, physical, and financial resources are mentioned here because managing them requires so much of the music executive's time.

Fund-raising, image enhancement, and public relations generally fall under the term "advancement." Because these activities are often centralized, the extent of the music executive's involvement in development efforts will vary from one institution to another. But even if he or she does not have direct responsibility for these activities, the successful music executive will be sensitive to every aspect of the program that may affect image, whether it may be the professional quality of a performance or the appearance of a promotional document.

For the most part, responsibilities that have been cited so far in this chapter may be thought of as special or extra. That is, they tend to fall outside the routine activities that fill most hours of the week, and many of them, as we have seen, are unique to music as an

academic discipline. These routine activities include keeping records, writing reports, answering correspondence, and attending what often seem like endless meetings.

As pointed out earlier, most of the music executive's special responsibilities are treated in detail in other chapters. They are included here for one very important reason: to illustrate the extraordinarily long list of responsibilities that go with the job of being the *music* executive, compared with other disciplines. In fact, it is not unreasonable to suggest that with few exceptions, completing every task required of you *cannot be done!* Except in a handful of institutions that might be thought of as "heavily" or "generously" staffed, bringing all of the tasks to a tidy conclusion will not be possible. To survive, much less succeed, in such situations, the music executive must learn where to compromise. Which tasks can be given short treatment? Which ones can be overlooked for a period of time? Perhaps more important, he or she must learn to be comfortable with the compromises.

## Delegating and Sharing Responsibilities

Some programs, especially larger ones, have support staff to assist the music executive, but few, if any, feel that they are adequately staffed. Successful administrators find help by delegating responsibilities to faculty and students.

To understand the nature of faculty responsibilities and how they are delineated from those of the administration, we may look to traditions of "best practice" and to guidelines of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We find what may be designated as areas of *primary faculty responsibility*, which include curriculum, instruction, academic programs, degree requirements, educational policies, and faculty status (e.g., appointment, reappointment, promotion and tenure). As we observed earlier, the fact that these are primarily the province of faculty does not excuse administration from responsibility for facilitating and supporting the work of faculty in these undertakings. We also find areas of *participatory faculty responsibility*, where administration and faculty share in such matters as development of the budget, long-term planning, establishing priorities, and the appointment and retention of administrators. And we find areas of *consultative responsibility*, which include any matters that affect or concern faculty.

When we delegate responsibility, we must be sure to provide adequate resources and authority. Or as some might put it, we must ensure that there is ample "room to fail."

## Tips for Personal Effectiveness

Some of the suggestions that follow may seem obvious, but most successful academic leaders will testify to their importance. This statement certainly holds true for *systems*. Systems provide structure and direction for dealing with otherwise chaotic tasks. They invariably save time and improve quality. If no system exists for addressing a complex task that you are confronting, invent one.

*Organizing time* is sufficiently important that advice about it has become the subject of scores of books and articles. The simplest, most basic advice on the subject is to avoid trying to do everything at once. We need to create blocks of time for dealing with specific issues, and then be fairly rigid in protecting the integrity of those blocks of time. Chances of success with this approach will be improved if we remember to set aside time even for the less critical and uninteresting tasks that go with the territory.

*Getting to closure* is something that faculty tend to find difficult to achieve. That tendency may stem from those traits or that training that led us to a life of scholarship, and the

skepticism that that implies. We see it in the determination to keep on examining or debating a topic, long after a logical decision has become apparent. In dealing with groups of faculty, it will often fall to the music executive to determine when all sides of an issue have been presented, and then bring the discussion to a close and move on.

The successful music executive *knows when to do nothing*. This approach is not suggested as a means of avoiding responsibility, passing the buck, or ducking unpleasant chores. Rather, sometimes the best thing to do is “nothing,” at least temporarily. How often have we gotten to the end of the day on Friday to be confronted by an issue that somebody is representing as a crisis, and one that requires immediate attention and action? Yet by Monday morning, the issue has gone away and is hardly remembered. Crisis is an overworked concept.

Disappointment and frustration are not exactly the same thing, but we tend to think of both as a product of outcomes. When our hopes are not met by the outcome, we are disappointed; when our expectations are not met by the outcome, we are frustrated. Example: I bought a lottery ticket when the jackpot reached several million dollars. I didn't win and I'm disappointed. Example: I wanted to become the greatest performer of my generation. I bought a superior instrument, found an outstanding teacher, and practiced endlessly. I didn't become the greatest performer—I didn't even come close—and now I'm frustrated. In both cases, my focus was on the outcome. The odds of winning a super jackpot are minuscule; the thought of becoming the greatest performer of my generation is terribly naïve. Often, when we are disappointed or frustrated, it is because we have focused on the outcome when the real problem is with hopes and expectations that are not realistic. We should aim high. We should set goals that make us stretch. But we should do so with realism.