

The Perilous Life of Symphony Orchestras: Artistic Triumphs and Economic Challenges

By Robert J. Flanagan


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This book analyzes the economic challenges facing symphony orchestras and contrasts the experience of orchestras in the United States (where there is little direct government support) and abroad (where governments typically provide large direct subsidies). Robert J. Flanagan explains the tension between artistic excellence and financial jeopardy that confronts most symphony orchestras. He analyzes three complementary strategies for addressing orchestras' economic challenges—raising performance revenues, slowing the growth of performance expenses, and increasing nonperformance income—and demonstrates that none of the three strategies *alone* is likely to provide economic security for orchestras.

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- Sales Rank: #1189020 in Books
- Published on: 2012-01-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.00" h x 6.20" w x 9.30" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

“This important and readable volume demonstrates the underlying disconnect between artistic achievement and economic reality facing the professional symphony orchestra. Its careful analysis, based on extensive data, lays out the ground, including relentlessly rising costs and ageing audiences, for concern for the future of this vital cultural activity in the U.S. and elsewhere. It is a volume not to be missed by anyone concerned with tomorrow’s state of the arts.”—William Baumol, *The Cost Disease*
(William Baumol 2011-07-26)

"Read the book, no matter how much you may not like what it has to say. Orchestras can't afford to ignore the issues it raises."

—Jesse Rosen, *Symphony Magazine*
(Jesse Rosen *Symphony Magazine*)

"[*The Perilous Life of Symphony Orchestras*] provides a crucial discussion of international models of financing and supporting orchestras, drawing vital comparisons between America's preference for private philanthropy and the state funded models elsewhere... Flanagan delivers informed commentary on the challenges facing labour-intensive, productivity-limited symphony orchestras with a straightforward 19th century institution in a 21st century economy with unflinching clarity... fascinating and insightful..."—Michael Quinn, *Classical Music*
(Michael Quinn *Classical Music* 2012-06-16)

“Valuable reading for those interested in the survival of symphony orchestras.”—*Choice*
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About the Author

Robert J. Flanagan is the Konosuke Matsushita Professor of International Labor Economics and Policy Analysis, Emeritus, at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He lives in California.

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