



MAESTRO: EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SERVANT-LEADER

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I don't know that I can define or articulate my leadership style. I can only think that I always tried to be prepared musically. Beyond that I guess I just tried to get the job done in a way that enables others to do their best and that affirms and supports them as professionals and as wonderful people.

—Henry Charles Smith

A large portion of existing servant-leadership literature focuses on defining what it is, describing how it differs from other leadership practices, discussing its merits, verifying its efficacy, and persuading others to embrace and practice its principles across a broad spectrum of organizational contexts (Cheshire, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995, 1998; Spears & Lawrence, 2002). In addition, there are insightful essays and personal reflections on servant-leadership formation by servant-leaders (George, 2003; Melrose, 1995; Turner, 1999), as well as thoughtful, creative learning materials and training programs designed to foster the development of servant-leaders available from the Greenleaf Center for Servant-leadership. Nevertheless, I believe this rich body of work has not yet articulated a complete understanding of how one becomes a servant-leader. Greenleaf offers his explanation of servant-leadership formation in the oft-quoted passage, "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 13). This begs the question: Where does this feeling come from and how is this choice made?



The study presented here is an interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989) and explores how Maestro Henry Charles Smith, a renowned Emmy award-winning musician, world-class conductor, and honored master teacher became a servant-leader. This exploration begins with a description of interpretive biography and data gathering, followed by (a) an introduction to Maestro Smith, (b) a brief review of servant-leadership, (c) Maestro Smith's reflections and interpretations of life events and experiences, (d) researcher interpretations of these events as well as reflections on Maestro Smith's servant-leadership, (e) implications, and (f) suggestions for future research.

INTERPRETIVE BIOGRAPHY

Denzin (1989) describes interpretive biography as a research method that focuses on understanding the lived experience of an individual. It involves the "studied use and collection of personal-life documents, stories, accounts, and narratives which describe turning point-moments in individual lives" (p. 13). These turning point moments or "epiphanies" are "interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives [because] they alter the fundamental meaning structures of a person's life" (p. 70). There are four forms of epiphanies: (a) the major epiphany involving an event that is life-altering, (b) the cumulative epiphany that involves reactions to recurring experiences over time, (c) the minor epiphany representing a significant "problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life," and (d) the re-lived epiphany that retrospectively gives meaning to past episodes when they are relived (p. 71).

DATA GATHERING

Maestro Smith and I engaged in a series of conversations and written correspondence throughout the summer of 2002. During this time Smith identified, recalled, and reflected upon events or periods of time that deeply impacted him as a person, musician, conductor, teacher, and leader. Addi-



tional data was gathered from interviews conducted with colleagues in June 2002, media materials, and other documents related to Maestro Smith's life and work. One important dynamic of interpretative biography is that the researcher actively participates in the interpretation of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Denzin, 1989). In recognition of this reality, my personal interactions with Maestro Smith are reflected in this biography.

MEET MAESTRO HENRY CHARLES SMITH

Andrea Banke, the principal oboist for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, will never forget the first time she met Maestro Smith:

I grew up believing the old cliché that great music requires great tyranny; that is until I starting working with Mr. Smith. The first time I played with Mr. Smith, I was a substitute playing the English horn solo in Symphony Fantastique, a very exposed part. I was terrified. When I walked on stage for rehearsal all I wanted was to get through the part and sit down. Mr. Smith called out to me, "Oh, hello there. How are you are? You know the part? Ah. Well, it will be beautiful!" I finished playing and started back to my chair when I heard a soft, "Well done." I was so astonished I felt numb. In my experience compliments from the conductor are unheard of.

I first met Maestro Smith in less dramatic circumstances while serving on the board of directors of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO). In short order, I discovered that I was in the presence of a master musician who had played more than 2,000 concerts as the principal trombonist with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Eugene Ormandy and many of the greatest conductors of the twentieth century. Henry, as his friends call him, is an accomplished trombone and euphonium soloist, chamber musician, writer, and editor whose recordings are internationally recognized. In 1969, he won the Grammy with the Philadelphia Brass Quintet for the Best Classical Record of the Year (Nowicke, 2002).

As a conductor he is equally accomplished. While on the conducting



staff of the Minnesota Orchestra he conducted over 1,000 concerts. He has guest conducted the Detroit, Dallas, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Phoenix, and San Antonio symphonies, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and most recently, the National Symphony Orchestra. He has also conducted the Young Artist Orchestra of Tanglewood. Thoroughly committed to teaching, Maestro Smith has served on the faculties of the Curtis Institute of Music, Indiana University, Temple University, St. Olaf, Bethel, and Luther Colleges, and the University of Texas. Maestro Smith is Professor Emeritus at Arizona State University.

Maestro Smith's organizational leadership roles include serving as Music Director of the World Youth Symphony at Interlochen Arts Camp for 16 years and the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra from 1989 to 2001. It is in the context of his role as an organizational leader that I first met Henry and came to realize that not only was he a master musician, but also a servant-leader.

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

In 1970, after having spent more than fifty years working within, observing, and studying large organizations, Robert K. Greenleaf distilled his thinking on leadership down to a single concept that he called servant-leadership. Greenleaf came to believe that servant-leadership is the only legitimate form of leadership because it abandons the use of destructive coercive power in favor of a benevolent approach to others that positively persuades and motivates people to become their best. Greenleaf concluded that "True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others" (Spears & Lawrence, 2002, p. 3). According to Greenleaf (1977):

The servant-leader is servant first . . . That person is sharply different from one who is leader first . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: Do those served grow as per-



sons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (p. 15)

Servant-leadership is based on the belief that serving others not only fosters the development of individual gifts and talents, but also ultimately builds genuine community.

Over the past three decades Greenleaf's serving first concept has captured the imagination and interest of practitioners and scholars worldwide. Synovus, TDIIndustries, Southwest Airlines, Toro, Service Master, The Men's Wearhouse, and Herman Miller are successful organizations that practice the principles of servant-leadership. Some of the most innovative and inspired authors, scholars and practitioners have challenged leaders to think about servant-leadership, to become open to its possibilities. These individuals include M. Scott Peck, Peter Senge, Max DePree, Margaret Wheatley, Ken Blanchard, Stephen Covey, Warren Bennis, Danah Zohar, Parker Palmer, and Peter Block, and this is only a short list. There are many others in numerous walks of life and organizations who are actively engaged in understanding and advocating servant-leadership principles and practices (Spears, 1998; Spears & Lawrence, 2002).

All have wrestled with the questions: Can a leader be truly effective as a servant? What does servant-leadership look like and how can it be developed? One of the most confusing aspects of servant-leadership is identifying its traits. While there is not one set of traits applied to servant-leadership, Spears (2002) has identified ten characteristics that he believes are essential in the development of servant-leadership. These include, but are not limited to, (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of people, and (j) community-building. The traits outlined by Spears are used in this discussion as they are commonly referred to and applied in servant-leader literature.

Spears' (2002) ten traits create a portrait of servant-leaders as people who possess the ability and desire to listen and empathize with others. Their



actions promote a healing of spirit-numbing wounds that gives rise to wholeness and shared trust. Servant-leaders persuade rather than coerce. They focus on building consensus. They share power and enjoy giving it away. Such leaders are self-aware and conscious of the impact power can have on eroding individual and collective values and ethics. Their personal wakefulness enables them to remain grounded when faced with obstacles and competing forces. Servant-leaders also dream. They are capable of conceptualizing future states and foreseeing outcomes. Servant-leaders are good stewards who encourage people to flourish as individuals. On a collective level, they understand the responsibility their organizations have for the greater good of society and seek to engage in multiple levels of community-building endeavors (Spears & Lawrence, 2002).

MAESTRO SMITH—PATHWAY TO SERVING

Servant-leadership is not the norm among conductors. Conducting is a profession that has been described as “the last bastion of totalitarianism in the world,” where “conductors stand at the very pinnacle of the orchestras’ musical hierarchy” (Seifert & Economy, 2001, pp. 9-10). In a disturbing description of life in orchestras, Levine and Levine (1996) observe that the “myth of the omniscient conductor” is granted to the conductor by orchestra members in the form of consent that “pretends the conductor stands on the podium by divine right” (p. 19). They further explain that “internalized norms and taboos protect the authority of the conductor from any challenge, even when musicians may be in a better position to determine how a work should be performed” (p. 19). In this controlled environment, the free exchange of ideas is not welcome, and musicians become “in essence rats in a maze.” In time, working in this maze leads to high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction. The fact that Maestro Smith’s servant-leadership emerged from this context and was sustained over many decades is quite remarkable, almost improbable.

When I asked Maestro Smith how this happened, he first replied that he had simply been lucky, but there is more than luck to his story. Maestro



Smith holds a deep conviction about attending to the welfare and well being of others in the process of making music. This conviction is the basis of his servant-leadership. It began forming when he was a young man trying to find his place in the world, and became part of his personal operating repertoire through his experience as a musician.

The Beginnings

Henry Charles Smith grew up in the affluent western suburbs of Philadelphia. His parents, Henry Charles Smith Jr. and Gertrude Ruth Downs, rented their home in this neighborhood to allow their children to attend the Lower Merion Township Schools. The family did not own a home until Henry was in high school. The family car, a 1937 Ford, was sold in 1941 when Henry's father could not get a gas rationing sticker sufficient to meet their commuting needs. The family turned to public transportation instead. According to Henry, "It didn't matter—we were all good walkers." Henry describes his father as a caring, ethical, and very conservative man who did not trust banks to hold his money. Not that it mattered; his father did not have much money anyway. Of his mother he says, "My mother was incredibly loving and supportive of everything I ever did—especially musical things."

Henry's grandfather, Samuel Edgar Downs, was a scholar, educator, and community leader. Downs was Superintendent of the Lower Merion Township School system. Through his leadership, the school system attained a level of excellence that was nationally recognized. Henry warmly remembers his grandfather as a very gentle man who really knew what he was doing as an educator and a community leader. Henry recalls that his grandfather

really cared about people, kids in particular. As a child of course I loved him as a grandfather, but I also realized that the way he treated people was special. I was also aware from my kid's eye perspective that the way people reacted to him, the way they treated him with respect and affection, was remarkable and unique. I guess I really wanted to be like him.



Grandmother Ruth was a linguist and world figure in Braille. She was the first person to translate all four Gospels into Braille, in three languages no less: French, German, and Arabic. Samuel and Ruth were known as “pillars of the Ardmore Presbyterian Church.” Henry Charles Jr. was not a churchgoer, but he encouraged church attendance for the children, which Gertrude managed. The extended family was deeply spiritual, but as Henry remembers, it was not something discussed openly. A table blessing before meals was observed, but beyond that their individual faith was a private affair. “But,” admits Henry, “I never had any doubt about who they were or what they believed—from day one my family was a ‘rock.’ The way they acted and treated each other said it all.”

The Musician

As a result of his attendance at the Narberth Presbyterian Church, young Henry met Bryant Kirkland, who was fresh out of Princeton Seminary. Kirkland made a lasting impression on Henry as a scholar and preacher, but more importantly, he gave Henry musical opportunities that encouraged the passion for music Henry had discovered when he was in the second grade. “I began to study the violin in school. I am not sure why. It just seemed like something I wanted to do. Jean Staples, the general music teacher, just made me feel like there was something wonderful about music.” When Henry attended a high school football game in the fifth grade, he heard the high school band for the first time and resolved that

I was going to play in that band some day. So I signed up for clarinet lessons in the sixth grade. I went to my first lesson and they handed me a baritone horn. I didn’t think it was a clarinet but I didn’t want to ask any stupid questions. They said, “Blow,” so I blew and a lovely F natural came out. I can remember it like it was yesterday. To the extent that you know this in the sixth grade, I knew this was an important moment and my life would hinge on this.

This revelatory moment launched Henry into his life’s work. He



learned to play the trombone, and by the ninth grade he was playing solos and winning competitions, including the Pennsylvania solo competition. Then the high school band director gave Henry the opportunity to conduct and write music for the band to perform. He often jokes that he became a musician because he couldn't be a high school football captain, but in all seriousness, he admits that prior to finding music:

I was a very unhappy average student. When sides were chosen for softball all the guys were picked, then the girls and then me. I was sensitive about this. But the recognition and joy I found from music changed me forever.

The now happy young man “without even trying or so it seemed,” became an honor student.

Reverend Kirkland encouraged Henry to play solos at church, which Smith says taught him early on how to “handle performance nerves.” Kirkland allowed Henry to use the church as a venue for rehearsing a youth orchestra and community choir he started. “The chance to create my own opportunity was priceless. The affirmation and support I received was invaluable.” However, in addition to this encouragement, Henry believes he was fortunate to have studied with Donald Reinhardt during his senior year in high school. As Henry tells it, Reinhardt did two very important things for him.

He said, “Every day, play Bolero as part of your warm-up.” So I did. Then when I had to play it with the Philadelphia Orchestra years later, it didn't make it easy, but it made it more predictable, and I knew I could play it. The other thing he made me do was to learn to read seven clefs. This has been enormously helpful as a player, and also as a conductor, because the seven clefs, of course, can be the basis of all transpositions. For score reading it has been a tremendous boon to me because it has just been second nature to read all those clefs and to transpose. Those were some of the wonderful things Donald Reinhardt did for me.

Henry credits his band director, Dr. Bruce Beach, with giving him a



life direction at this young age: “My ambition at that point was to become a band and orchestra director. If that is what Dr. Beach did, then that is what I wanted to do too.” Kirkland’s influence, however, had young Henry leaning toward the ministry, but as Henry confesses, “Music won out.”

Henry completed an undergraduate degree in music at the University of Pennsylvania and went on to receive an artist’s diploma from the Curtis Institute (sandwiched in between were two years in the U.S. Army). Then he auditioned for the principal trombone with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He became the Associate Principal for the orchestra for 18 months and then Principal. Pondering this, Henry remarks that “all this happened as if lightening had struck and I really had no idea why or how come. I really owe my career to my grandfather, Jean Staples, Bruce Beach, and Eugene Ormandy.”

The Teacher

In time, Henry, like others in his family, began teaching because it is “what you do as a musician.” But more importantly, he taught because he “found that performers who teach and teachers who perform are consistently happier, better adjusted, and more productive. Performance is so individual and ego-centered. To not teach becomes a real dead end that stifles one in many ways.” Henry also discovered a deep sense of purpose in teaching that focuses on the development of succeeding generations. He has never forgotten an interaction he had with Rostropovich when the master cellist first came to America to record the Shostakovich Cello Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

I asked him, “Do you teach?” With an astonished look on his face Rostropovich said, “Of course we teach. If we don’t, who will?” Here was one of the greatest cellists of his era who all his life would teach his students all day and then in the evening give a recital, play a concerto with a major orchestra, or accompany one of his students at the piano in their recital.



Reflecting on this Henry concludes, “It makes sense—to pass on your skills to others and to care about others. It helps to complete a circle of energy and healthy humanity.”

The Conductor

Henry believes that “had it not been for all the rests in the trombone parts,” he probably would not have become a conductor. Since the trombone is used in a limited way in the symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mendelssohn, he had time on his hands and became interested in everything going on in the orchestra. He started bringing full scores to rehearsals and followed along when he was not playing. “I ultimately found it more challenging to be responsible for the entire concept and interpretation of a piece than just playing and fitting the trombone into other parts.”

The young Maestro Smith quickly learned, however, that conducting involved more than interpretation. He became aware that each role, that of player and that of conductor, is accompanied by its “own set of nerves and stress problems.” As a conductor he understood both kinds of stresses and was determined to help musicians deal with the stress through support and appreciation, qualities he frequently encountered in his relationship with Eugene Ormandy. Henry admits he adored Ormandy because he always felt affirmed and supported by him.

Ormandy told me a few months after I joined the orchestra that after the first five notes of my audition he decided to hire me. When I asked why, Ormandy replied, “Because I heard a sound, a concept of phrase and music making I wanted in my orchestra.” When your boss tells you that, it increases the terror every time you play because you want to live up to expectations and do your best. His attitude towards me often was, “Don’t tell me it is difficult, don’t tell me it’s impossible, just do it.” The effect this had on me was to tell myself, “He thinks I can do anything,” so I would try and I usually could. Even when he was being demanding, he was supportive and affirming of me as a musician and a person.



Henry has a similar memory of Leopold Stokowski when the master guest conducted in the 1960s.

He was conducting a rehearsal and a concert with some big brass moments and difficulties—lots for the trombones to do. I was having a bad day physically with the horn. Nothing was working right. However the clarity of Stokowski's conducting, the inspiration of the moment, his genius at conducting an orchestra, his positive supportive attitude, his appreciation of my efforts, his intense concentration lifted me past the physical struggle I was having and I gave one of the finest performances of my career.

However, in spite of these affirming experiences, an unexpected incident with Ormandy left Henry questioning his desire to conduct:

Ormandy had decided it was time to get rid of a particular woodwind player, a man who had played with Stokowski and Ormandy over 40 years with distinction. Ormandy put this player in a very stressful musical situation without warning. It went badly. This player was put on the spot again. It went terribly. His health was immediately affected. Every time Ormandy gave him a cue, he had a look that said, "I dare you to do it right." Health suffered more. After a week of this treatment his doctor told this player if he wanted to live he had to get out of the orchestra. He did and his health improved. Seeing this happen two rows in front of me, I resolved that if conducting meant you had to do things like this, I would never conduct.

These incidents profoundly impacted the developing Maestro and his approach to leading—an approach that includes being ever mindful of the conductor's complete dependence on the musicians, as well as the emotional toll performing takes on them.

I am after all the only person on stage who does not make a sound. As one who made his living for many years as a decent trombonist, I will never forget how extremely difficult, challenging, and nerve-shaking it is to play well in front of 3000 people—or even 10 people. I try to remember this when I conduct.



Looking back on his career as a conductor and leader, Henry reflects,

When I was a very young conductor I wanted very much for people to like me. Probably I thought too much about this. Now I am eager to achieve the finest performance possible. I want the players to want high standards as much as I do. I want them to love the music as much as I do. With these goals in mind, I am glad if someone likes me, but I am not obsessed with making this happen. I have learned that you must work through the framework of your own personality. I really want most to tend to the musical business in a way that affirms and supports the musicians personally and artistically.

DISCUSSION

According to Greenleaf (1977), servant-leadership emerges from a deep desire to help others followed by a conscious choice to lead. This choice is not made once and only once. The leader continually chooses to lead in spite of the fact that the outcome of the choice is “always a hypothesis under a shadow of doubt” (p. 15). Yet the choice is made, and through psychological self-insight the choice is sustained. The major, cumulative, minor, and relived epiphanies of Maestro Smith’s life reflect this process.

Major Epiphany

Henry’s major epiphany was the moment he first attempted to play the baritone horn and recognized that his life would “hinge on this.” This sudden awareness changed his life forever, giving him a sense of identity that no longer involved how he viewed his lack of athletic ability. This lack became essentially meaningless as he discovered a sense of purpose through his passion for music.

The passion for music and recognition of his talent gave birth to his desire and sustained motivation to achieve artistic mastery. Initially his service was to music, with the goal of making the best music possible. But



making music involves interaction with others, and as Henry matured and grew into adulthood he began to recognize the significance of the human equation in making music. Moreover, Henry began to realize that he possessed an inclination and a desire to lead. The greater question was, how to lead? Henry found the answer to this question through cumulative epiphanies involving his experiences with others.

Cumulative Epiphanies

These recurring moments involve the observation of behaviors and interactions with significant family members, teachers, clergy, musicians, and conductors. These behaviors demonstrated the primary concern for the welfare and well-being of others. His family modeled caring for one another and encouraging the development of gifts and talents. This modeling took place by his mother within the family and through the activities in which Henry's father, grandfather and grandmother were engaged. His father, as a banker, focused on ethical practices; his grandfather worked on community building and preparing students to take their place in that community; his grandmother promoted healing among the sight impaired by creating access to spiritual resources that could be read in Braille in several languages.

Henry's teachers served as mentors who repeatedly gave him encouragement and provided him opportunities to develop his talent and think broadly about possibilities. Maestro Ormandy firmly believed in Henry's talent and demonstrated his faith in his horn player by expecting and enabling him to excel. Even though Ormandy was demanding, he was also patient and supportive when Henry was struggling. The result was that Henry's talent flourished. Rostropovich challenged Henry to think about teaching from a different perspective. Up to this point, Henry had viewed teaching as a necessary activity. After this interaction, it dawned on him that he was engaged in an activity that could contribute to building a circle of healthy humanity in the present and in the future. Unknowingly, Henry's family, teachers and conductors collectively modeled characteristics of servant-leadership that he eventually absorbed into his leadership repertoire.



Epiphany

The minor epiphany that profoundly challenged Maestro Smith came from his experience of watching, “two rows ahead” of him, a colleague and friend being subjected to harsh criticism and emotional abuse from Maestro Ormandy, someone Henry “adored” and deeply respected as a musician and mentor. This incident left Henry questioning his desire to conduct. In order to realize his ambition to conduct, he had to resolve this conflict. Maestro Smith identifies this incident as a significant career-defining moment because it was from this experience that he began to consciously think about how he would lead. This was the moment of choice.

Maestro Smith chose to lead not by emulating Ormandy, but by leading from “the framework of his own personality.” His self-insight allowed him to recognize that the only way he could lead was to “tend to the musical business in a way that affirms and supports the musicians personally and artistically.”

Relived Epiphanies

Performing, while intensely creative and enjoyable, is also very stressful and anxiety provoking. Every time Maestro Smith conducts, he relives his own experience as a musician. He remembers how “difficult, challenging and nerve shaking it is to play well” in front of an audience. This awareness of and empathy for the pressures others experience awakens and reaffirms his approach to placing first priority on people.

Maestro Smith’s servant-leadership evolved from the ground of these experiences—perhaps not consciously by Henry’s naming it as such, but rather through natural tendencies that concentrated his efforts on making music while attending to the needs of others first. Musicians who worked with him as the Music Director at the SDSO think of him as a mentor and model. The members of the Dakota String Quartet and Woodwind Quintet admire the way he gave them major leadership roles, often asking them what would work best for their sections when preparing for performances.



As a result they grew as musicians and leaders. Moreover, they have become conductors, composers and better teachers because of Henry's commitment to them as individuals and as artists. Recollections of interactions with Maestro Smith by those who worked with him consistently reveal the characteristics of servant-leaders outlined by Spears (2002).

Listening, Empathy and Healing

Magdalena Modzelewska had just arrived from Poland when she was selected as the principal second violin for the SDSO. She tells the story:

I had just left my country and my teacher. I was alone for the first time, both with living and playing. I could not believe I had gotten this job. I was very nervous and frightened; it was an emotional time for me. I felt my playing was suffering. I went to him and told him how I was feeling. Mr. Smith was so kind to me, so human, and he had such confidence in me. He did not say much, but I felt like he heard me because after that during one rehearsal we came to a trouble spot for the section. He stopped and said to me, "Magda, show everyone what you want to play here, play it for them," so I did. After that I started to play better myself.

In this situation Maestro Smith listened and empathized. His actions supported Magda emotionally and professionally. He invited her to lead and in so doing promoted healing by restoring her confidence in herself as a person and as a musician.

Similarly Christopher Hill, Principal Clarinet for the SDSO, recalls that when Maestro Smith became Music Director for the SDSO, the morale of orchestra members was at an all-time low. The former Music Director had been dismissed after a stormy tenure. Hill explains:

We had just survived a very difficult situation. When Mr. Smith arrived there were over 30 musicians on probation and we were basically a community orchestra! Henry had a lot of healing to do. He had to prove we could trust him. The first time I played for him he let me take the solo I



was playing at my pace and had the orchestra follow my lead. I felt like I mattered again.

Commitment to the Growth of People

Because Hill felt he could trust Henry, he mentioned his desire to conduct someday. Before long, Hill found himself on the podium with a baton in his hand. Hill remembers that the Maestro was infinitely patient and helpful. He never criticized. Instead he would say, “How about trying it this way?” Today Hill is the Music Director and Conductor of the Sioux Falls Municipal Band, performing over 33 concerts every summer throughout the community. Says Hill, “If it weren’t for Henry, I would never have had the courage to do this.”

Hill was not the only musician encouraged to develop his skills to pursue a dream. Nathan Pawelek, Principal Horn for the SDSO, was given the opportunity to test his skills as a composer. Pawelek says, “Henry had more faith in me than I did in myself. I never thought I would have the thrill of hearing something I wrote played by full orchestra.” Steven Yarbrough, composer in residence at the University of South Dakota echoes these sentiments: “Not only did Henry give me a break on the regional and national level, he also enabled me to do things I didn’t think I could do as a composer.” Pawelek and Yarbrough are active composers, frequently commissioned to create new works because of Henry’s commitment to their growth and his stewardship of their dreams.

Stewardship

Banke recalls a particularly memorable example of the Maestro’s stewardship while serving with Henry on an audition jury for the Dakota Wind Quintet. When one of the aspiring musicians started playing behind the audition screen, it became instantly clear that the individual lacked tal-



ent, preparation, experience, or all three. Banke laughs when she tells the story:

I looked over at Mr. Smith. He had a look of horror on his face but quickly regained his usual calm composure and let the audition continue for another five or ten minutes. Those of us on the jury were wondering what was going on, because typically when this happens the person is excused right away. Finally Mr. Smith stopped the audition and then to our complete surprise he asked the person to come out from behind the screen. He actually began a discussion with the player, asking him what he might have done differently to prepare for the audition and giving him suggestions for improving his playing! I of course had written the kid off after several phrases, but Mr. Smith showed me I had a lot to learn too. He turned failure into an affirming learning experience for this musician.

Maestro Smith's stewardship of individuals, even those he barely knew, was very consistent, but it did not end there; it was also extended to the larger organization of the orchestra. Through Henry's stewardship the SDSO survived a period of overwhelming financial pressure. His conceptual ability coupled with foresight, his collaborative persuasive leadership, and his commitment to the community prevented the SDSO from even thinking about canceling future seasons when financial failure was a distinct possibility.

Conceptualization, Foresight, Persuasion, and Commitment to Community

The SDSO suffered a near fatal blow when the ceiling of the old performance hall suddenly collapsed, leaving the orchestra homeless. As a result, for the next five years the SDSO gamely played in convention halls, gymnasiums, churches and a basketball arena. Maestro Smith affectionately nicknamed the orchestra the "gypsy symphony."

During the "gypsy" years attendance dropped dramatically, and the SDSO was faced with a severe financial crisis. As a survival strategy, the



Board considered disbanding the Dakota String Quartet and Woodwind Quintet (the Q & Q), the professional core of the orchestra. Henry knew that if this happened the quality of the orchestra would be severely eroded, creating a lingering talent deficit in seasons to come. During the board meeting regarding this impending action Henry remained steadfast, determined and positive. He talked about the orchestra without the Q & Q. He talked about the lost opportunity to attract talent that would stymie artistic growth, but more importantly, he reminded the Board that without the Q & Q the orchestra would not be able to reach out to schools and communities throughout the state, including smaller towns and the Indian reservations west of the Missouri River. The Board placed its confidence in Maestro Smith's vision and instead of folding went to the community to raise emergency funds to keep the Q & Q intact. Moreover, the Board made an even bolder move that contributed to the community's commitment to build the Washington Pavilion of Arts & Sciences. Today the Q & Q tours throughout South Dakota, performing over 160 concerts per year in small performance halls, churches, nursing homes and schools. The musicians regularly interact with students, fostering their appreciation for and interest in music. They teach and mentor aspiring young musicians and even have students try their hand at composing and conducting.

Maestro Smith taught the board and the community valuable lessons during those years about looking beyond the obstacles of the present toward the potential of the future. Not that this was an easy time for Henry or the musicians. They were professional artists with a renowned Maestro, playing in basketball arenas! Their managing to maintain their commitment and morale was in large part a result of Henry's awareness of the impact this situation could have on the orchestra and the community.

Awareness

Maestro Smith confesses that playing in a basketball arena during "the gypsy years" was very hard:



It was more than difficult to deal with the heat, light, ambient noise from fans and lights and stage problems before you could even think about the music. Every time I had to go on stage I thought to myself, “This is the last time I will ever do this,” but then the music would start and I would forget about it. I was constantly aware that if the leader cracked or showed frustration it would have a horrible effect on the morale and the performance of everybody else, including the audience. Survival demanded a PMA from me, a positive mental attitude. I tried to focus on making the best music possible. The show must go on, and somehow it did.

The show went on because Henry remained rooted to his core values of caring for others and making the best music possible. His awareness of himself was the source of the strength that upheld him and the orchestra throughout this five-year challenge.

Moreover, during this time the orchestra not only survived, but also continued to develop artistically. The true test of this development came when the new Washington Pavilion of Arts & Sciences opened in the fall of 2001 with Yo Yo Ma as the featured guest artist.

Orchestra members recall being “scared silly” to play with an artist of Ma’s stature. Ma was even asked during a press conference whether playing with a regional orchestra comprised of only nine professional musicians was perhaps beneath his talent. Ma shrugged this comment off. Ma knew Maestro Smith, and the Maestro knew how playing with a great artist could bring people to an individual and collective peak. Henry vividly remembers the first rehearsal with Ma. “We were rehearsing the Dvorak Concerto, which features a long orchestra introduction before Ma would begin to play. At about thirty measures into the score, Yo Yo looked over at me and said, ‘Wow!’”

In his characteristic self-effacing manner, Maestro Smith took no credit for this outcome. He simply thanked Ma, the donors, the audience, the community, and the musicians for making it all possible. Such is the servant-leadership of Henry Charles Smith, focused on making the best music possible through attending to the needs and dreams of other people.



Summary

Based on Maestro Smith's recollection and reflections on his lived experiences, it appears that the foundation for Maestro Smith's servant-leadership was laid early in his life through his experiences with family and other significant people who modeled behaviors complementary to servant-leadership. He matured personally and professionally surrounded by mentors who enabled his talent to flourish, who challenged him to strive for excellence and achieve artistic mastery. By the time Maestro Smith turned to leading others full-time, he possessed a keen awareness and deep understanding of the potency of conducting and its potential impact on musicians artistically and personally.

Through a series of meaningful experiences combined with self-reflection, he chose to lead and resolved to do so from the "framework of his own personality." This framework includes the imperative to treat others with loving concern for their welfare and well being, even when faced with pressure to do otherwise. Through his experiences, Maestro Smith became rooted to the belief that people are as important as the music, and decided that as a leader, he would pursue musical excellence in a supportive environment that nurtures not only talent, but the human spirit as well.

IMPLICATIONS

Maestro Smith's story supports Greenleaf's assumptions regarding the emergence of servant-leadership. These assumptions are as follows:

1. The underlying catalyst for servant-leadership is the desire to help others.
2. This is followed by the conscious choice to lead and to lead as a servant first.
3. The choice to lead from this perspective is always accompanied by doubt.



4. Self-insight enables the leader to overcome doubt; self-insight sustains the choice.

The implication of these assumptions is that a leader must first possess the desire to serve. Without it there can be no servant-leadership. This begs the question, where does this desire come from? What if a leader does not have this desire? Can it be developed, and if so, how? Correspondingly, once a person chooses to lead, what motivates the leader to adopt servant-leader behaviors? What sustains the choice over time? Greenleaf suggests that it is self-insight that informs and sustains the choice, but how? Finally, how does a leader make the leap from the desire to serve to actually serving? How does the leader translate this desire into actions that reflect the ten traits of servant-leaders?

Returning to Maestro Smith's reflections on his life and leadership, three themes emerge. They are: (a) the strength of Henry's commitment to demonstrating a loving concern for the welfare and well being of others, (b) his unwavering optimism and belief in his ability as an artist and a leader, and (c) his capacity to engage in meaningful self-reflection. These themes could be called the underpinnings of his servant-leadership. The implication for servant-leader theory is that without these underpinnings, servant-leadership might not emerge at all, or it might emerge but then erode under pressure.

In pondering the themes embedded within Maestro Smith's story, it seems clear that servant-leadership is learned over time. Within servant-leader literature there is not a large body of work that links servant-leadership with theories or concepts of human development. Such theories may be worth exploring, for they may offer additional insight. In reflecting on Maestro Smith's story, three concepts come to mind: (a) human value formation (Rokeach, 1979), b) efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997), and (c) hope (Shorey & Snyder, 1997). A brief mention of these concepts is offered for future consideration.



Human Values

Values are “core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society” (Rokeach, 1979, p. 2). Values are learned, arising from experiences that engage psychological processes and involve social interaction, cultural patterning (Williams, 1979). Russell (2001) contends that “values are the core element of servant-leadership; they are the independent variables that actuate servant-leader behavior” (p. 9). Maestro Smith’s stories suggest that his leader behavior is indeed based on a strong set of values complementary to servant-leader principles.

Self-efficacy

Just as values are learned, self-efficacy beliefs are socially constructed. Individuals with strong efficacy beliefs choose their course of action and optimistically work toward goal attainment, and in so doing exert positive influence on their environment. Bandura (1997) has observed that “the striking characteristic of people who have achieved eminence in their field is an unshakeable sense of efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing” (pp. 72-73.) In the case of Maestro Smith this certainly seems to be true. His actions are deliberate, intentional, infused with goodwill and an unshakeable faith in positive outcomes.

Hope

Hope is a dynamic, powerful, and pervasive cognitive process that enables people to envision a promising future and then to set and pursue goals, even when faced with the most overwhelming obstacles (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991). While Maestro Smith exhibits rich self-insight, it is not certain that self-insight alone is sufficient for sustaining the choice to serve. When Maestro Smith witnessed Ormandy’s treatment of a colleague, he was conflicted; he had to make a choice to lead through his principles, but how? He remembered how others had treated him. He had



been the recipient of empathy, healing, and persuasion rather than coercion, which gave him a commitment to development and community building throughout his life. He was able to draw on this large store of experiences that pointed the way. It may be that self-insight and hopeful thinking work together to sustain the choice to lead as servant first.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

This interpretive biography has explored the formation of servant-leadership through the lived experiences of a single servant-leader. As engaging and compelling as this life story is, it is not sufficient for answering the question of how servant-leadership develops. Additional research is required if a deeper and clearer understanding of this phenomenon across leaders is to emerge. The following suggestions are presented for future research:

1. Exploring other autobiographical and biographical reflections on servant-leadership development to identify common themes across these experiences. These explorations could be conducted using cross-case study, phenomenological, or grounded theory research methods. Do the stories of other servant-leaders reveal a similar pattern of events or themes that accompany life epiphanies?
2. Determining how underlying servant-leader convictions become manifest in actual behaviors. A leader may hold firm convictions about serving first but the leader's actions may not demonstrate the ten characteristics. How does one make the leap from thought to action?
3. Understanding processes that awaken self-insight. Is it possible for leaders to develop the capacity to engage in self-reflection that informs future behavior? And if so, how?
4. Viewing servant-leader development through the lens of social psychological and cognitive theories of human development such as human values formation, self-efficacy, and hope. What role do values and efficacy beliefs play in servant-leader development? Can they be



changed and strengthened, and if so, how? What is the role of hope in servant-leadership—does it help sustain the choice to be a servant-leader? If yes, how?

The potential value of this research lies in fostering a deeper understanding of development experiences that might generate ever more effective ideas for releasing the gift of servant-leadership.

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