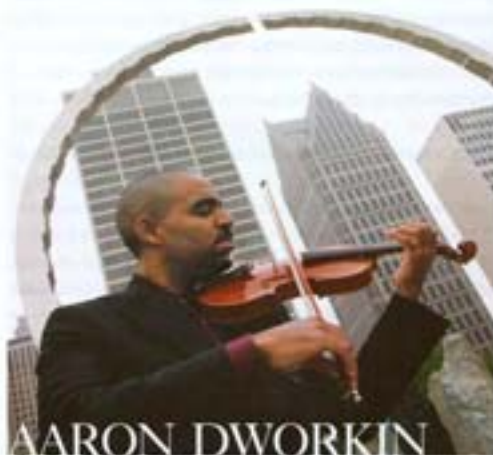


# Leading the PAC

Whether they've been in the business 10 years or 25,  
two arts administrators share the same vision:  
Do what you love and love what you do.

INTERVIEWS BY ALICIA ANSTEAD



AARON DWORKIN

"I do not consider myself an arts manager. I consider myself a social entrepreneur. To be a good and capable arts administrator, there are important experiences in the field that person should pursue."

**LEADER:** Aaron Dworkin, president and founder, Sphinx Organization, Detroit, Michigan

**AGE:** 34

**MISSION:** To combine classical music and cultural diversity through supporting the training and careers of black and Latino musicians.

**ALICIA ANSTEAD:** When did you know you were headed for a career as the president of an arts presenting organization?

**AARON DWORKIN:** I didn't look at it as me being in a leadership role. It was more that I came to the realization of the work I had to do. I was still a student coming to terms with the problem of lack of diversity, and I came to the conclusion that I have to do something about this. I felt driven to do something. By default, I ended up being the leader of that struggle. The driving force was not to be a leader, but to bring about change.

**ANSTEAD:** Is there one person whose values, visions or heart you admired enough to emulate in your work?

**DWORKIN:** I have a number of people I would refer to as mentors, musicians and arts leaders. But in terms of work ethic or one's role in life, my parents really set that standard. They worked all the time as scientists, but they loved their work and believed it was bettering humanity. They believed everything you do should be enriching or furthering positive contributions to our world.

**ANSTEAD:** If someone were to come to you and say: "I'm interested in becoming an administrative leader in the arts," what life experience would you encourage that per-

son to seek out or examine?

**DWORKIN:** I believe there are two types of leaders: managing and entrepreneurial. So I'd have to determine which category that person falls in. I do not consider myself an arts manager. I consider myself a social entrepreneur. To be a good and capable arts administrator, there are important experiences in the field that person should pursue: knowledge of the workings of organizations, how to manage systems and people, and how to drive organizations toward better productivity and higher levels of excellence. Those who are looking to change a field or build an organization from scratch require greater creativity, a greater sense of persistence, thinking outside the box and identifying the resources to make that vision become a reality. Both are difficult; but they require different skill sets and different personalities.

**ANSTEAD:** You started as an artist and then became the president of an organization. How important was your work as an artist to your role as a leader?

**DWORKIN:** For me, it's critical to everything. I started playing the violin at 5; I am a violinist. I don't consider myself an arts administrator or manager. I view the Sphinx Organization as an artistic product in and of itself. I look at it creatively and artistically. My drive is based on my experiences as a musician and as a black violinist specifically.

**ANSTEAD:** What's the biggest obstacle on a day-to-day basis?

**DWORKIN:** You need persistence and total commitment and belief in what you are doing, because the challenges that face you on a day-to-day basis are myriad. That persistence and belief will carry you through any challenge. Overall, the greatest obstacle is pragmatic; it's funding.