

# encore

by Elizabeth Hauck



## a most valuable player

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra volunteer **Richard "Dick" Spero** works more than 40 hours a week, attends every concert, writes grant proposals and is the force behind the BSO's expanding educational programs in Montgomery County.

A 38-year resident of Montgomery County, Spero is BSO's Community Liaison, choosing to spend his "golden years" actualizing the orchestra's community outreach initiatives at Strathmore, its second home. After retiring in 2004 from a career as an economic consultant, Spero and his wife, Irene, started volunteering at Strathmore a year later. Spero's occasional service, combined with an insatiable love of classical music, gradually turned into a critical full-time, post-retirement position.

### **Q. Why is community outreach important for the BSO?**

The BSO's outreach in Montgomery County is a concrete way of implementing Maestra Marin Alsop's goal of "accessible excellence." It's also an appropriate way to give back to our community and to assure our financial supporters that they are receiving a solid return on their investment in us.

### **Q. What are you most looking forward to this season?**

Our new partnership with Wheaton High School and A. Mario Loiederman Middle School. The aim is to mentor each school's orchestra, especially with respect to rehearsal techniques. The program starts with an open rehearsal where the members of the Wheaton Philharmonia sit on stage with the BSO and witness firsthand how a world-class orchestra goes through a rehearsal under Marin's direction. Then, our assistant principal violist, Christian Colberg, will work with both orchestras on their home turf, leading rehearsals, master classes and directing Wheaton's winter concert. In the spring, the middle school band will sit in on a Wheaton orchestra rehearsal, enabling the older students to mentor their younger peers.

### **Q. What is your hope for this program?**

If the students continue their music education that's great, but even if they don't, the experience of working together in a creative enterprise should be a valuable and unforgettable life skill.

### **Q. Do you have a favorite story from the BSO outreach program?**

During an oboe trio performance, a mentally challenged student was fidgeting tremendously and seemed inattentive. At the end of the performance, this child approached the musicians and hugged them! Every time I tell that story, it moves me because it perfectly illustrates how music can touch the soul of all of us.

### **Q. As an unpaid staff member, what keeps you motivated?**

Our success. This is a "win-win" for our audiences *and* our musicians. I think Marin is absolutely on the mark about making the orchestra accessible to our community and I am thrilled to be the facilitator.

### **Q. When are you *really* going to retire?**

When I can no longer do this job effectively. Aside from my 45 years of marriage and raising our two sons, this is the most wonderful thing I've ever done.