

[Current Issue](#)

[About Forever Young](#)

[Where To Find](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Our Advertisers](#)

[Community Calendar](#)

[Contests](#)

[Clubs](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Archives](#)

[Home](#)

FOREVER YOUNG MAGAZINE
IS PUBLISHED BY:

BUFFALO SPREE
PUBLISHING, INC.

WEBSITE BY
OTHERWISZ

Current Issue

[back to current issue table of contents](#)

Section: Arts & Letters

An Interview with Dan Hart, Executive Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra By Robert Hirsch

Robert Hirsch: What brought you to Buffalo and the Philharmonic?

Dan Hart: I was born in Nebraska, but grew up in Peoria, Illinois. I was recruited by the BPO and began as Executive Director in September 2004. The BPO is a great orchestra, we perform in an extraordinary hall, have a fantastic music director in JoAnn Falletta, a hard working but lean staff, and many warm and generous board members and volunteers that support us.

RH: Describe your career path?

DH: I've played music since the fourth grade. Back then we took music education for granted. It is not the same today, which is something the BPO has to focus on. I have spent 20 years working with orchestras. Back in the mid-1980s I was chosen for a Management Fellowship by the American Symphony Orchestra League (the national trade association for orchestras), it was a yearlong training program where I worked with different orchestras to gain the experience to become a manager. That gave me my start. I've always enjoyed business and interaction with people. At the BPO I can combine all my interests into a great job.



Dan Hart.

RH: Is your work rewarding?

DH: It is fulfilling to be a part of something so important to the community, to our audiences and to our musicians. It is a creative

endeavor and intellectually challenging — more of a life-style choice than a way to make a living. The actual performance of music has a dramatic and profound affect on me. I cannot imagine living without it. My knees were shaking the first time I played a Mahler Symphony. Playing in the Vatican was a transformational experience. Art is a powerful force for me whether as a performer or patron.

RH: What's your typical week like?

DH: My weeks are long, but full of diverse tasks. I work with Maestro Falletta and our new Resident Conductor Robert Franz on programming, and the best part — attending concerts is part of my job!

RH: What is coming up at BPO?

DH: The great soprano Renee Fleming on February 18th will be wonderful and the return of violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in April. I am excited about a two-week residency we have scheduled for Buffalo-born and raised, William Eddins, who is a fantastic conductor and pianist.

RH: How did you discover photography?

DH: I originally went to college on an art scholarship. In the mid-70s there was an explosion of photographic activity and I got caught up in it as a high school yearbook photographer. My career came back to music so photography took a back seat. But, thanks to my wife's encouragement, I'm back into photography.



Work from Dan Hart's Pensacola, Florida Series.

RH: Why do you like photography?

DH: I am first drawn to the urban landscape and capturing the things I find visually exciting about it. Now I am motivated to photograph our two children, Allie and John, as they grow up. There is magic in photography which compels me to keep taking pictures. It has to do with seeing the image appear in the darkroom tray. When I am doing photography I get transported to another place and it helps all the other aspects of my life.

RH: What are you reading?

DH: I am re-reading Diane Arbus by Patricia Bosworth. Arbus one of the most important artists of the 20th century and her images had a profound effect on me when I first saw them in the early 1970s.

RH: Is your life like what you imagined when you were younger?



Work from Dan Hart's Pensacola, Florida Series.

DH: I have to pinch myself. I knew I would spend my life in the arts and I am doing that. I work at the center of a highly creative, energetic and rewarding organization, and personally, I never imagined how much joy I would get from family life.

RH: This is Valentine's month, how did you meet your wife?

DH: Barbara ran a non-profit artist's gallery in Baton Rouge. I worked for the Baton Rouge Symphony. We met across the table at arts council meetings! I played hard to get and did not go out until she asked me for the third time! And I am glad she did!



Work from Dan Hart's Pensacola, Florida Series.

RH: Is Buffalo a good city for artists and the arts?

DH: My wife Barbara, who makes jewelry, and I are extremely impressed with Buffalo and the arts it supports. The visual arts are important to us and the fact Buffalo has the Albright-Knox, Burchfield-Penney, Buffalo Artists Studio, CEPA Gallery, Hallwalls, and many other spaces is great. From the perspective of someone who has lived all over the country, the arts here are a true treasure.

RH: How do you suggest people who are bringing up children build a career?

DH: Family is the best thing about life so you cannot put your career before it. Hopefully success with family will inspire one's career to higher

success!

RH: Do you have any pets?

DH: We have two birds, a turtle, five or six fish and four rabbits. Enough already!

RH: How do you stretch yourself toward bigger goals?

DH: I try to determine how I can do better at a given task or decide on a specific accomplishment and set goals to achieve it.

RH: What do you see as your biggest challenges?

DH: Audience development for classical music is a big challenge in an age of unlimited choices. I have rarely seen anyone, young or old, not like a concert experience with the orchestra. The challenge is getting them in the door and to keep the BPO in mind as they think of things to do for fund and enjoyment.

RH: What you do to relax?

DH: Family time, I play guitar, golf, photography and movies!

RH: What recent film has made a lasting impression?

DH: “Crash” for how it dealt with issues of race and class and cultures, perceptions and stereotypes, understanding and misunderstandings. This is a vitally important issue to me and to all communities and the film gave audiences real food for thought.

RH: What do you like about Buffalo? How does its stereotypical image impact you? What would you change?

DH: We love this community. It is easy to get around. Close to nature and other cities. The people are super friendly. It has a vibrant arts community. Buffalo gets a bum rap for weather. Someday others will get the idea and flock here! To promote economic growth, Buffalo should embrace the arts, not only for cultural tourism, but also as a key quality of life issue that is important to attracting new business and their employees.

[back to top](#)

[back to current issue table of contents](#)

Current Issue | [About Forever Young](#) | [Where to Find](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Our Advertisers](#) | [Community Calendar](#) | [Contests](#) | [Clubs](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Archives](#) | [Home](#)