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People who make Hawaii work: Jonathan Parrish



Courtesy Hawaii Symphony
Jonathan Parrish

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The Hawaii Symphony Orchestra chose its assistant principal horn player to be its executive director late last year. Jonathan Parrish, who has played with the orchestra since 1998, replaced interim president Steven Monder, who continues as a senior adviser.

Born in Washington, D.C., Parrish, 51, holds music degrees from James Madison University and the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. He has been general manager of Chamber Music Hawaii and an adjunct faculty member at the University of Hawaii.

Why I took this job: I believe in this orchestra and could not turn down an opportunity to help it realize its full potential.

Like most about the job: Meeting so many people who share my love of music.

Immediate priority: Artistic planning and fundraising.

What I value in my employees: Collaboration. Being a musician has made me keenly aware of the power of collaboration. You can't perform in an 80-person orchestra and play the same note at exactly the same time, at exactly the same tuning, at exactly the same volume and end it at exactly the same time without understanding and trusting this power.

Most important mentor: I've certainly had many as a musician, but as an arts manager I would have to first credit my father, whose Sunday sermons inspired my public speaking ability. I would also have to mention two Chamber Music Hawaii board members who have directly mentored me during my tenure: Jane Campbell, former executive director of the Honolulu Theatre for Youth, and the late Nancy Bannick, former board member of nearly every arts or historic preservation organization in Honolulu.

I'm inspired by: Music.

Favorite stress reducer: Music.

Favorite way to spend free time: Music.

Best place I've traveled to: Hawaii, of course. Though Norway and France are not bad.

Favorite island: One of the best parts of being a professional musician in Hawaii for the past 15 years has been having so many opportunities to visit all of our beautiful islands. I've performed in venues, schools and libraries from Kilauea to Kau. I'm still waiting for an invitation to perform on Niihau.

Book by my bedside: "The Cycle: A Practical Approach to Managing Arts Organizations" by Michael Kaiser, executive director of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Brett Egan, director of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the Kennedy Center.